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THE TRAGEDIES OF EURIPIDES.

THE
TRAGEDIES OF EURIPIDES

IN ENGLISH VERSE.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

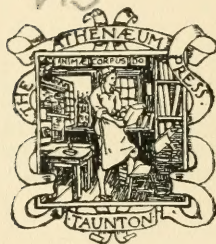
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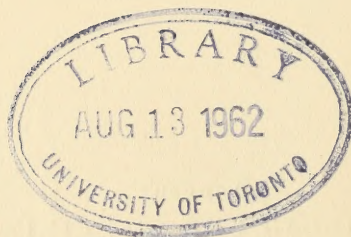
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PREFACE.

WHILE with respect to some of the plays in vol. ii, the translator might almost regard himself as challenging for them the attention of the English reader and the average student, he has, in this concluding volume, to take up the burden of attempting an adequate presentation of works whose fame so raises expectation as to add not a little to the formidable nature of his task. Hence I have, I trust, been not ungrateful for the strictures of some of my critics on preceding volumes, and have endeavoured to profit by them, the more willingly, as I cannot but recognise that their general tendency is in the direction of making the translation metrically more satisfactory, and so more readable. If in my blank verse these my counsellors (may I call them fellow-helpers?) still detect some of the old blemishes, I would ask that, before condemning me of obstinacy or of insensibility to rhythm, they will take note of the special difficulties involved in attempting to combine the four objects I have kept constantly before me, three of which seem to me to be essentials of every translation which claims to be more than a paraphrase. First, the English reader demands, not lexicon-language, but clear, straightforward, idiomatic English, free from all meaningless inversions which are simply evasions of metrical difficulties. Secondly, the scholar requires a close adherence to the original, omitting nothing that is vital to the author's meaning, inserting nothing that is not at least latent in the text, and not neglecting *nuances* of signification

conveyed by particles, tense-forms, and the like. Thirdly, both alike will expect that, where the order of words in the original gives a special effect of emphasis, energy, or emotional colour, the translation should, if possible, preserve this. In imposing upon myself the fourth condition of a line-for-line correspondence with the original, I stand, so far as I know, alone among translators of the Greek drama, and fully recognise that opinions may well differ on the question whether its advantages outweigh its drawbacks. For there can be no dispute that it greatly enhances the difficulty of achieving blank-verse worthy of the name as the vehicle for a translation uniting the above-mentioned essentials. He must be a consummate artist indeed, who, with such a four-fold object to keep in view, never admits a resolved foot, or the spondaic effect of concurrent monosyllables, save where the sound is designed to echo the sense.

A translator who does not wish to burden his work with notes, which have their proper place in a commentary, must continually make his choice, without remark, between various disputed readings and interpretations. He will probably, *ceteris paribus*, choose those which seem best adapted for poetic treatment; and may not unreasonably hope that critics will not assume that he has neglected his obvious duty of acquainting himself with the views of the various commentators, before making his silent choice.

The *Rhesus* has been placed last of the plays in this concluding volume, in deference to the doubts which many competent judges entertain with respect to its authorship. The arguments in favour of ascribing it to Euripides, summarized by Paley in vol. i of his large edition, make it impossible for me to omit it; nor on its own merits would I have wished to do so. That it is the earliest of his extant works there can be little doubt: its comparative weakness in dialogue and individualization of character suggest im-

maturity; but, while we miss the ripened judgment and the sure touch of the practised hand, which were developed later, we already find the firstfruits of genius, the lyric gift, and the imaginative faculty, in the lovely nocturne chanted by the sentinel-chorus (527-37, and 546-56), in the picturesque description of the night-march of an army through the forest, and in the weird dream of the charioteer.

The *Cyclops* I have omitted. It did not come strictly within the scope of the task I had set myself, the translation of the Tragedies; and the English reader has already the version by Shelley, which is at least free from that frigidity which is apt to be the snare of the classical translator.

I have to express my grateful acknowledgments to Dr. Sandys and to Prof. Tyrrell for most kind assistance in revising the *Bacchanals*.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE CHORUS.

IN Aristotle's *Treatise on (Dramatic) Poetry*, the following passage occurs: "The dramatist's conception of the chorus should be as of one of the actors in the drama, as contributing to the complete effect; accordingly the chorus must take part in the action, not in the manner of Euripides, but in the manner of Sophocles." The genuineness of the reading has been disputed¹; but, assuming it to be correct, the meaning of the writer is somewhat ambiguous. Did he mean, "It does this indeed in Euripides, but not so artistically as in Sophocles," or, "It does not do this in Euripides, but it does in Sophocles?" We are not much helped by a comparison of the extant plays of these two poets; for, while, out of the seven plays of Sophocles, in three the chorus are in such close sympathy with the "hero," that their fortunes are in a manner bound up with his, in two² they are warmly sympathetic; and in two³ they are, though interested as spectators, yet but coldly sympathetic with the chief actor. In the eighteen plays of Euripides we find that in eleven the chorus similarly share the fortunes of the chief actors, and render them all possible aid; in four⁴ they are warmly sym-

1. Hartung would read "in the manner of Euripides or in the manner of Sophocles."

2. *Trachiniæ* and *Electra*.

3. *Oedipus Coloneus*, and *Antigonê*.

4. *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Orestes*, *Electra*.

pathetic, and sharers in their plot ; while in three¹ they are (by reason of their personality) simply interested spectators, stirred only to occasional sympathy. If, therefore, we apply the critic-philosopher's words, in their plain sense, to the personality of the chorus, and to their part as subordinate actors, it would seem to follow that his conclusions were based upon a survey of these two poets' dramatic works more complete than is possible to us. But this is not the sense in which they are usually applied by those who compare the merits of Euripides and Sophocles, to the disadvantage of the former. Passing by the part taken by the chorus in the ordinary and the lyrical dialogues, they fasten upon the choral odes (technically known as *stasima*) which divide act from act, and maintain that, whereas these were previously integral parts of every play, expanding, idealizing, or emphasizing the thought suggested by the foregoing dialogue, and so contributing to the vital unity of the play, in Euripides they became mere ornamental interludes, either wholly irrelevant to the dramatic context, or connected with it only slightly and occasionally. We will presently consider whether this view is borne out by an examination of his eighteen extant tragedies : but we remark at the outset, that it is directly opposed to the view of Aristotle, who, in the two sentences which immediately follow the somewhat ambiguous one already quoted, adds what is not ambiguous at all, viz. : " But as for *the other dramatists*, the choral odes are no more relevant to the particular plays in which they occur than to any other tragedy. Accordingly, these chorus-chants of theirs are mere interludes (*embolima* is the technical expression), the example of introducing which was first set by Agathon."

Now this testimony of Aristotle is of capital importance to

1. *Phœnician Maidens*, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and *Andromachê*.

a right view of the question ; for, not only had he access to the complete works of these dramatists, but he was in a position to judge, not merely of their literary merits, but of their effect when acted, with all the stage-accessories, the music, the effects of delivery and action, designed by their authors. We may take it, moreover, that he represented, not an individual judgment, but the high-water mark of Greek dramatic criticism in the hundred years following the death of Euripides.

If, therefore, those who find fault with the choral odes of Euripides are to derive support from Aristotle at all, it must be by reading into his words some meaning which they do not incontestably bear. The only phrase which affords an opening for such a liberty, is that which occurs in the doubtful text, "not in the manner of Euripides." And, in the absence of corroborating testimony from Aristotle, they are compelled to fall back upon the extant plays to substantiate their contention. But in the pages of our scholar-critics the reader will seek in vain for any detailed analysis of these choral odes : he will be met by general allegations, and by one or two instances given with wearisome iteration, from which he is expected to infer that, as is the sample, so is the mass. It is time, then, in the interests of fair play, and of literary justice, to sift these accusations by means of an analysis of the eighteen extant tragedies. I do not propose to go through each choral ode (that would require a long treatise, and would be superfluous in a work which places the odes themselves before the reader), but simply to summarize, in a *catalogue raisonné* of the plays, the results of a detailed examination of the subjects of the odes.

The point in dispute, then, being the dramatic relevance of the choral odes, we may define this as the criterion of dramatic relevance, that the sentiments of the ode spring directly from the dramatic situation to which the action of

the play has brought us, and are filled with the emotions which it is calculated to excite. Adopting this, then, as our touchstone, we may arrange the plays in four groups:—

I.—Plays in which all choral odes are closely relevant to the immediate dramatic context.

Under this head fall half the extant tragedies of Euripides, viz.:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <i>Rhesus</i> | B.C. 450 (cir.) | 6. <i>Suppliants</i> | B.C. 420. |
| 2. <i>Alcestis</i> | „ 439. | 7. <i>Children of Herakles</i> | |
| 3. <i>Medea</i> | „ 431. | | B.C. 415 (cir.) |
| 4. <i>Hippolytus</i> | „ 429. | 8. <i>Orestes</i> | „ 408. |
| 5. <i>Ion</i> | „ 425 (cir.) | 9. <i>Bacchanals</i> | „ 406. |

The appended dates show that plays of this class were confined to no particular period of his life, but were pretty evenly distributed over his whole career.

II.—Plays in which the choral odes are closely relevant, either to the dramatic context, or to the enveloping action. By the term “enveloping action,” is implied the course of events out of which the situation of the play has been developed, or to which it is leading.

Under this head fall:

1. *The Iphigeneia at Aulis*, in which one choral ode refers to the enveloping action of the future (751-800).
2. *The Daughters of Troy*, in which one choral ode refers to enveloping action of the past (511-567).
3. *The Madness of Herakles*, in which one ode refers to enveloping action of the past (359-424).
4. *The Hecuba*, in which one ode refers to the enveloping action of the past (905-952), and one to that of the future (444-472).

In none of the above cases (with the exception of *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, 751-800, where the reader is left to infer the connection) is the entire ode irrelevant to the immediate dramatic

context: the concluding portion, generally the Epode, furnishes the connecting link, or specific application.

Euripides does not stand alone in this widening of the application of the choral ode: both Aeschylus and Sophocles furnish similar instances, *e.g.*, the opening chants in the *Agamemnon* and the *Antigonê*.

III.—Plays in which some of the choral odes are relevant to features of the legend of which the action of the drama is an episode. Here the dramatic relevance consists in the fact that the present situation is the outcome of the past event, either by the doom of the Gods or through natural causes.

Under this head fall:

1. *The Phœnician Maidens*, in which occur one such chant (638-675), and half of another (1019-1043).
2. *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, which contains one (1036-1079).
3. *The Andromachê*, which contains two (274-308 and 1009-1046).
4. *The Electra*, which contains two (432-486, 699-745).
5. *The Daughters of Troy*, which contains half an ode of this class (795-819).

In these, as in those of II, the connection with the dramatic context is indicated somewhere in the ode.

Sophocles' *Trachiniæ* (498-532) furnishes a similar example.

IV.—Plays which contain choral odes of which the relevance is not at first sight obvious.

Under this head fall:

1. *The Helen*, which contains one such chorus (1301-1368).

Here the relevance is twofold. (a) To a great parallel: then a Goddess, the daughter of a Goddess, was lost, and the search of those who loved her was long baffled: now a woman, the daughter of a God, has been long lost, and the search of him who loved her has been long baffled. (b) To

an obscure cause: may the Goddess, the story of whose afflictions is recalled by those of Helen, have been offended by some sin of omission or commission on her part?¹

2. The *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, which contains one such chorus (1234-1283).

Here the relevance is again twofold. (a) It was the oracle of Delphi that had led Orestes to Taurica: his obedience to it had redeemed him from the persecution of the haunting furies, had plucked him from the brink of death, and had restored to him a sister. The misgivings which had troubled him, the murmurings which had broken from him, when it seemed as if the God had betrayed him to his destruction, had been found baseless. Those who had seen all this might well take as their theme the institution of an oracle so strikingly vindicated. (b) But again, the same oracle had superseded the ancient divination by dreams; and here, once more, the Oracle, which has guided Orestes aright, has triumphed over the Dream (44-55), which has misled Iphigeneia almost fatally; and thus yet another attempt of Earth, the ancient sender of dreams, to recover her lost prerogative, has failed. The decree of Zeus is ratified, and the right of Apollo is maintained, as against the old nature-worship.

It may be noted also, that, the barbarian king being close at hand, a non-compromising chant ("speaking to those who can understand," in Pindar's phrase), which shall convey no hint of the situation to hostile ears, is required by dramatic propriety.

3. The *Madness of Herakles*, in which half a chorus is of this nature (637-672).

Here we have an expansion of the idea contained in the *parodos*, or entrance-song of the chorus (107-129), and in the

1. For a full discussion of the question, the reader is referred to Prof. Moulton's *Ancient Classical Drama*, pp. 181-2.

first choral ode (436-441), the special relevance being therefore to the character of the chorus, who cannot but feel that it is their own impotence, the infirmity of age, which has denied to them all share in the great deliverance, and that all they can now do is to extol him who has achieved it.

The relevance of the three foregoing odes, it will be seen, is not so much to the immediate context, as to some idea, or *leit-motif*, which dominates the whole play.

It will have been perceived that II, III, and IV are not mutually exclusive.

There are, again, a few choral odes which, though relevant to their own dramatic context, yet admit of more general application; and to these some writers have applied the stricture of Aristotle, that "they are no more relevant to the particular plays in which they occur, than to any other tragedy." Such are, the ode in the *Medea* on the perils of parentage (1081-1113), that in the *Hippolytus* on the despotic tyranny of Love (1268-1282), and the *strophe* and *antistrophe* (543-573) in *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, deprecating unbridled passion, the baleful effects of which have been seen in the sin of Paris. But, in the first place, we have already seen that Aristotle himself did not regard these, or any odes whatever of Euripides, as meriting that censure, which he reserved for later poets; and no wonder, for in three plays of Sophocles there are no fewer than six choral odes¹ against which the same objection could as reasonably be urged. Secondly, to admit such a contention would be to lay down as a literary canon the absurd rule that the perfect dramatist may not descant on the emotions, experiences, and aims, which are the master-springs of action and passion in human life, except with exclusive reference to the particular persons or situations which illustrate them in each case.

1. *Oed. Rex*, 863-910; *Oed. Col.*, 668-719, 1211-1248 *Antigone*, 332-375, 781-801, 1115-1152.

We may, therefore, justly object to such odes being called in any sense irrelevant.

To sum up the results of our examination, we find that, out of nearly ninety choral chants¹ in the eighteen extant tragedies of Euripides, more than seventy are closely relevant to the dramatic context: five dwell mainly on the events which have led up to the present situation, or which will result from it: eight point to remoter causes or parallels: and three can be shown to be relevant to some dominant idea, or *leit-motif*, of the play.

Now, in every such instance of divergence from strict conformity to general precedent, the reader will find that there is an artistic reason for it. It would take too long to show this in detail, nor should it be necessary: but, speaking generally, we shall find it attributable to (1) the relation of the chorus to the actors, or (2) the nature of the immediate situation.

1. The personality of the chorus. In the *Phœnician Maidens*, the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and the *Andromaché*, the chorus is so constituted, that its members, though profoundly impressed by the events passing before them, are but slightly interested in the personages of the drama, who are comparative strangers to them. Hence they are inclined to dwell upon what does concern themselves as much as the actors, the workings of fate, the fulfilment of the Gods' doom, the far issues involved: only in the climax of the tragedy is their attention arrested, as it were in spite of themselves, by actual present developments. But, it may be objected, is not this very thing to be regarded as an artistic fault in Euripides? Not if we bear in mind the true function of the

1. This enumeration includes, to avoid confusing the English reader, the *parodoi*, or processional chants with which the chorus enters the theatre, which are always relevant to the situation, generally commencing with an explanation of their presence there.

chorus, which is, not to furnish a running comment, necessary or superfluous, on act after act, but to impress on the spectators the deep lessons of the play, to strengthen faith, to quicken sympathy, to purge men of their selfishness (as Aristotle suggests) by the operation of pity and fear.¹ The fact that the chorus in *The Phœnician Maidens* are strangers enables them to take an impartial view of the question at issue, and to pronounce on the side of justice. This is precisely what we miss in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, where they breathe no word hinting the faintest disapproval of the injustice and perjury of their king, which have brought about the war.

In the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, the aloofness of the chorus invests the heroine with a certain majesty of loneliness in her awful trial, which throws her heroism into stronger relief, and reminds us that the Alpine summits of duty must be scaled alone.

So, in the *Andromachê*, the cautious reticence of the chorus, who, as subjects of the royal house, dare not utter their sentiments,² imparts to the heroine a forlorn grandeur, which stimulates the spectators' sympathy and admiration.

In the *Electra*, the protagonists, daring a deed without a

1. Aristotle's words are:—"It (Tragedy) effects, by means of pity and fear, the purgation (or purification) of such emotions." The question of the precise meaning of this clause has given rise to much learned discussion, and to somewhat esoteric interpretation. The reader who wishes to acquaint himself with the most recent conclusions of English scholarship, will find them ably set forth in Prof. Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*. The simple interpretation which I have hazarded above assumes that selfishness is the special taint from which our pity and fear need to be purified. These emotions are too apt to be based on solicitude for ourselves or our friends. Hence Tragedy, which takes men out of themselves, till they are "wrought to sympathy with hopes and fears they heeded not," may, by teaching men to feel pity and fear apart from all selfish considerations, be said to tend to the purification of the springs of these emotions within us.

2. They receive a significant hint with respect to this very thing from Hermionê, at the outset (l. 154).

name, enter a valley of shadows of death where human experience has no chart for guidance, where human wisdom can but tremble, and human conscience shudder; and those who so fearfully and doubtingly watch them must hark back for light and leading to memories of glories marred by the sin now to be expiated, of link on link of ancient retribution to be consummated now.

In the *Daughters of Troy* and the *Hecuba*, on the other hand, the chorus are themselves as much involved in the action of the drama as the chief actors, and the real protagonist, the martyr whose sufferings comprehend all partial woes, is neither Hecuba, nor Polyxena, nor Andromache, but Troy, whose past agony of leaguer and sack, and whose imminent fate in the persons of her exile-children, are designedly impressed upon the spectators.

2.—The nature of the immediate situation. "Fools," says Hesiod, "who know not how much greater is the half than the whole!" It is the inferior artist who does not know when reticence best befits, when silence is more eloquent than speech. There are in tragedy, situations which not only call for no comment, but where comment is sacrilege. One illustration may suffice. An act closes with a situation like that in which Polyxena is torn from her mother's arms (*Hecuba*, 443). What should the chorus say? They feel instinctively that this is the beginning of the end, the first of the final strokes of doom for Troy's exiles, and with shuddering anticipation they chant the lost ones' song of foreboding.

But it is not in these exceptional choral odes only, but in many, very many, of those which are closely relevant to the dramatic situation, that we find a certain element which is comparatively lacking in those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. It was a distinctive feature of Euripides' genius that every dramatic situation was to him fraught with a suggestiveness

which kindled his imagination, which stirred his human sympathy, which flashed upon his soul revelations of the problems of existence. Hence his choral odes are generally in themselves beautiful poems, interesting apart from their context. Doubtless the new departure was welcomed by the Athenian audience generally, who, after having, in the course of two generations, listened to some hundreds of formally relevant odes, must have become fairly expert in forecasting what an average chorus would sing, and might be spared the reproach of "decadence" in taste, if they longed for a little relief from the too-obvious comment, the inevitable moralizing. They were somewhat in the position of our fathers who, after enduring for two generations the bards who boasted Pope for their master, and held his style to be the "last word" in English poetry, hailed with glad surprise the strange freshness of Cowper's note, and ere long wondered to find themselves still so young in spirit as to be enthralled by the romance of Scott and Byron. The new style was, of course, not without its dangers: it was a bow of Ulysses which only the master-hand could bend. It became a snare to weaker men, in whom talent and graceful play of fancy took the place of genius and inspired imagination. So Agathon and his successors wrote the pretty poems which the great critic was soon to brand as empty of the soul of tragedy. The style of Euripides was the style of Euripides, not of a school of imitators. But that his innovation was, in his hands, not perfectly legitimate, it has been left to Schlegel and his disciples to detect, with a penetration which has discerned that which eluded the judicial acumen of Aristotle, and even the keen-eyed hatred of Aristophanes.¹

1. Aristophanes' very hostile criticism of the choral odes of Euripides is based on quite different grounds, viz., certain verbal mannerisms, and the character of the music to which they were set.

THE DEUS EX MACHINA.

IN no fewer than half of the extant tragedies of Euripides we find the intervention of a God introduced at the end of the play.¹ In every case the deity speaks "from the *machina*," a stage contrivance by which the actor appeared to be throned upon clouds, or to be hovering in a winged chariot, or some similar device. From the fact that in the fourteen extant plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles only one such intervention occurs, we may fairly conclude that this was a distinctive feature of Euripides' work. This practice of his is by some scholars cited as a mark of his inferiority as an artist, as though he constructed his plots so clumsily as to get them into so hopeless a tangle at the end of the play that poetic justice could be secured only by violent supernatural interference. Now, whatever may have been the dramatist's motive, we may affirm unhesitatingly that it was not this. True, in two plays of Euripides, as in one of Sophocles, a God does intervene when the action has reached an *impasse*, the result of which threatens to be a contradiction of the legend on which the play is based, and an outrage on the spectators' sense of justice. But in no one case is this deadlock the direct outcome of the action. In the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, the spectators would not have been surprised if the hero had finally yielded to the prayer of Neoptolemus; their surprise may well have been that he still hardened his heart. To some readers, his conceding, without the slightest demur, to a word from Herakles, that which he had not the magnanimity to grant to the almost irresistible persuasiveness of Neoptolemus' repentance and pleading, comes as a somewhat "lame and impotent conclusion:" he seems a smaller man, a less heroic hero. So, in the *Orestes*, the hero

1. *Ion*, *Hippolytus*, *Suppliants*, *Andromachê*, *Electra*, *Helen*, *Orestes*, *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, *Rhesus*.

“holds the trump card,” in having Hermioné’s life at his mercy: it was to be expected that Menelaus would yield, and indeed he does not refuse to do so. Orestes simply loses patience with his shifty hesitation; and his precipitating a catastrophe averted in the end only by Apollo’s intervention is directly counter to the natural outcome of the plot. Again, in the *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, the escape of the heroine and her friends is, in the natural course of events, as much assured as in the very similar situation in the *Helen*: the adverse wind is a pure *contretemps*. Thus both poets appear to have made a gratuitous difficulty, purposely staving off the natural dénouement, sacrificing dramatic probability to, we may surely assume, a higher object.

In the remaining seven plays which end with a divine intervention, there is no knot to untie.¹ The introduction of the deity takes place in each after the dénouement is effected. What the God does is to speak the epilogue, so to say, of the piece in the form of prophecy or ordinance. His intervention serves, not to save the credit of the dramatist, but to bring home to the spectators the religious significance of this, and, by inference, of every drama of human destiny.

The poet’s object we may conceive to have been twofold:—
1. To remind the audience that, if their deities were real beings, they were as real for them as for the men of the heroic age. The average Greek believed implicitly in the historical truth of the story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and remembered that not only were the heroes guarded and guided at every turn by the Immortals, but that the consummation of the *Iliad*, the burial of Hector, and that of the *Odyssey*, the reconciliation of Odysseus with his subjects, were alike

1. I do not except the *Hippolytus*, since Theseus could have been enlightened without the appearance of Artemis. So the scepticism of *Ion* and the anger of Theoklymenus (*Helen*) are minor issues, devices to bring about the appearance of the deity, which is an object in itself.

brought about by the intervention of deities, of Hermes and Athena respectively. What the modern girds at as the *chronique scandaleuse* of Olympus, bore a very different aspect to the average Greek. Instead of degrading the Gods, it elevated man. They thought of their ancestors, the founders of cities and institutions, as sons of God, and of themselves as of one family with the Heavenly Ones. It was, therefore, natural that the Gods should intervene in crises of the fate of the nation or its founders. Had not ancient heroes of the blood of Gods fought for them at Marathon? Had not Pan himself been the herald of that victory? Had not Athena's presence and voice kindled the onset at Salamis? The age of miracles was, for the average Greek, in no sense past, and it did him good to be reminded of this. Homer was his "Shorter Catechism," and when the boy at school learnt from the *Odyssey* how

"The Gods in the bodies of outland strangers veil from sight
 Their godhead, and pass through cities, and mark who doeth
 aright;
 And they stand by the tyrant unseen, beholding mischief and
 spite,"

his master did not explain to him that this was but an old-world fable. And that a dramatist who may himself have held higher and worthier views of the Deity should here have conformed to popular conceptions, is evidence, not of inconsistency, but of wisdom. "He fed them with milk, and not with strong meat." To help men to be honest and true, to be haters of injustice and jealous for the right, the old faith was better than the new scepticism.

2. His second object may well have been to make men better patriots, by recalling to the spectators' minds the divine origin of their race, their city, their religious institutions, and their national policy. In seven out of the nine

plays in which the *deus ex machinâ* appears, the speech of the deity has special reference to Athens and her future.¹ In the *Ion*, Athena proclaims the divine origin of the Ionian race, and foretells the greatness of her colonial empire. In the *Suppliants*, the foreign policy of Athens is vindicated, and Athena puts her for ever in the right as against Argos. In the *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, the *Orestes*, and the *Electra*, the origin of some of her religious institutions, particularly of the sacred court of the Areopagus, is stamped with divine sanction. In the *Helen*, a passing allusion makes an island on the Attic coast holy ground. In the *Rhesus*, the Muses are proclaimed authors of the inspiration of the poets and religious teachers of Athens, and the rites of the Mysteries are declared to have been taught from heaven.

Each such drama, in which the storm and stress of human struggle and suffering is closed by a note of peace and divine assurance and far-reaching promise, became an object-lesson in patriotism. Athens would seem better worth living for and dying for, when men realized that they held her in joint-possession with Gods, when they recognised that, in guarding as a sacred trust her immemorial institutions, in celebrating her splendid festivals, they were sealing to themselves the blessings intertwined with these, when they grasped the thought that in planning, toiling, and fighting for her, they were fellow-workers with Athena, Apollo, and the Twin Brethren.

As M. Decharme acutely observes,² "Aristotle, who regards the introduction of supernatural machinery as perfectly legitimate 'for whatever is outside the limits of the action of

1. Cranmer's prophecy at the end of *Hen. VIII* may serve as a literary parallel. Its effect, however, on the most enthusiastic Elizabethan audience, could be scarcely comparable with the impression made by such utterances as these on the Athenians.

2. *Euripide et l'Esprit de son Théâtre*, p. 401.

a given play.'¹ that is to say, for the enunciation of events which are to follow it, as for those which have preceded it, has no word of condemnation for this dramatic combination of human agency with divine. That it was a mere stage-trick, a playwright's shift, has been revealed to the wisdom of the modern critic only."

1. Aristotle in one instance only takes exception to the employment of supernatural machinery by Euripides. The introduction of Medea's dragon-car is, in his judgment, a violation of dramatic propriety, "*because it is used to effect the dénouement.*" The inference is obvious, that he did not regard the other instances of divine intervention as open to the same objection.

THE PHŒNICIAN MAIDENS.

ARGUMENT.

WHEN Oedipus, king of Thebes, was ware that he had fulfilled the oracle uttered ere he was born, in that he had slain his father, king Laius, and wedded his mother Jocasta, he plucked out his own eyes in his shame and misery. So he ceased to be king; but, inasmuch as his two sons rendered to him neither love nor worship, he cursed them with this curse, "that they should divide their inheritance with the sword." But they essayed to escape this doom by covenanting to rule in turn, year by year. So Eteokles, being the elder, became king for the first year, and Polyneikes his brother departed from the land, lest any occasion of offence should arise. But when after a year's space he returned, Eteokles refused to yield to him the kingdom. Then went he to Adrastus, king of Argos, who gave him his daughter to wife, and led forth a host of war under seven chiefs against Thebes.

And herein is told how the brothers met in useless parley; by what strange sacrifice Thebes was saved; of the Argives' vain assault; and how the brothers slew each other in single combat.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JOCASTA,¹ *wife of Oedipus.*

OLD SERVANT, *attendant on Antigônê.*

ANTIGONE, *daughter of Oedipus.*

POLYNEIKES, *exiled son of Oedipus.*

ETEOKLES, *son of Oedipus, and king of Thebes.*

KREON, *brother of Jocasta.*

TEIRESIAS, *a blind prophet.*

MENOIKEUS, *son of Kreon.*

MESSENGER, *armour-bearer of Eteokles.*

OEDIPUS, *father of Eteokles and Polyneikes.*

CHORUS, *consisting of Phœnician Maidens, dedicated by the Tyrians to the service of Apollo at Delphi, who, resting at Thebes on their journey, have been detained there by the siege. Daughter of Teiresias, guards of Eteokles, attendants of Jocasta and of Kreon.*

SCENE :—In front of the Royal Palace at Thebes.

¹ Pronounced Yocasta.

THE PHŒNICIAN MAIDENS.

Enter Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

O THOU who cleav'st thy path mid heaven's stars,
Who ridest on thy chariot golden-clamped,
Sun, whirling on with flying steeds thy fire,
What beams accurst on that day sheddest thou
O'er Thebes, when Kadmus came to this our land, 5
Leaving Phœnicia's sea-fringed realm afar !
He took to wife Harmonia, Kypris' child,
And begat Polydore, of whom, men say,
Sprang Labdakus, and Laïus of him.
I, daughter of Menoikeus am I named ; 10
My brother Kreon the selfsame mother bare.
Jocasta men call me : this name my sire
Gave ; Laïus wedded me. But when long years
Of wedlock brought no child our halls within,
He went and questioned Phœbus, craved withal 15
For me, for him, male heirs unto his house.
The God spake : " King of chariot-glorious Thebes,
Beget not seed of sons in Heaven's despite.
If so thou do, thee shall thine issue slay, [20
And all thine house shall wade through seas of blood."
Yet he, to passion yielding, flushed with wine,
Begat a son ; and when our babe was born,

Ware of his sin, remembering the God's word,
 He gave the babe to herdmen to cast forth
 In Hera's Mead upon Kithairon's ridge, 25
 His ankles pierced clear through with iron spikes,
 Whence Hellas named him *Swoln-foot*—Oedipus.
 But Polybus' horse-tenders found him there,
 And bare him home, and in their mistress' hands
 Laid. To my travail's fruit she gave her breast, 30
 Telling her lord herself had borne the babe.
 Now, grown to man with golden-bearded cheeks,
 My son, divining, or of some one told,
 Journeyed, resolved to find his parents forth,
 To Phœbus' fane. Now Laius my lord, 35
 Seeking assurance of the babe exposed,
 If dead he were, fared thither. And they met,
 These twain, where parts the highway Phocis-ward.
 Then Laius' charioteer commanded him—
 "Stand clear, man, from the pathway of a prince!" 40
 Proudly he strode on, answering not. The steeds
 Spurned with their hoofs his ankles, drawing blood.
 Then—why tell aught beyond the sad event?—
 Son slayeth father, takes the car, and gives
 To Polybus, his fosterer. While the Sphinx 45
 Was ravaging Thebes, when now my lord was not,
 Kreon my brother published that the man,
 Whoso should read the riddle of that witch-maid,
 Even he should wed me. Strangely it befell—
 Oedipus, my son, read the Sphinx's song,¹ 50

¹ The Sphinx, couched on a rock commanding the entrance to Thebes, proposed this riddle to all who attempted to pass:—

"There's a thing two-footed on earth,—four-footed,—three-footed; yet one

Whence he became the ruler of this land ;
Yea, for his guerdon wins the throne of Thebes,
And weds his mother,—wretch !—unwitting he,
Unwitting she that she was her son's bride.
And children to my son I bare, two sons, 55
Eteokles and famed Polyneikes' might,
And daughters twain : the one the father named
Ismênê, the elder I, Antigônê.
But, when he knew me mother both and wife,
Oedipus, crushed 'neath utterest sufferings, 60
On his own eyes wrought ruin horrible,
Yea, with gold brooch-pin drenched their orbs with
blood.
Now, being to bearded manhood grown, my sons

Is the voice thereof; and it changeth its form, this thing
alone
Of all that on earth walk, soar through the air, or in sea-
depths swim.
But lo, whensoever on most limbs borne it essayeth to run,
Then is it ever the weakest, the slowest in speed of limb."

All, failing to solve it, were torn to pieces, till Oedipus expounded it thus :—

"Hearken, how loth soever, thou foul-winged Muse of the
slain,
Unto my voice which tells thee the end of thy guile and
thy doom.
Man is the thing thou hast named : four-footed he crawls
on the plain,
What time he hath first come forth a babbling babe
from the womb.
And when he is old, must a staff, as a third foot, his weak-
ness sustain,
As he stoopeth his neck 'neath the load of his years, as
he bows to the tomb."

Thereupon the Sphinx hurled herself from the rock, and
was killed.

Close-warded kept their sire, that his dark fate,
 By manifold shifts scarce veiled, might be forgot. 65
 Within he lives : but, by his fate distraught,
 A curse most impious hurled he at his sons,
That they may share their heritage with the sword.
 They, terror-stricken lest, if they should dwell
 Together, Gods might bring the curse to pass, 70
 Made covenant that Polyneikes first,
 The younger, self-exiled, should leave the land,
 That Eteokles tarrying wear the crown
 One year—then change. But, once in sovrantry
 Firm-seated, he would step not from the throne, 75
 And thrust Polyneikes banished forth the land.
 To Argos fares he, weds Adrastus' child,
 And bringeth huge war-muster of Argive shields.
 To our very walls seven-gated hath he come,
 Claiming his father's sceptre and his right. 80
 And I, to allay their strife, persuaded son
 In truce to meet son, ere they touch the spear :
 And, saith the messenger I sent, he comes.
 O dweller Zeus in heaven's veiling light,
 Save us, grant reconciling to my sons ! 85
 Thou oughtest not, so thou be wise, to leave
 The same man evermore to be unblest.

[*Exit.*

Enter, above, Old Servant and Antigônê.

OLD SERVANT.

Fair flower of thy sire's house, Antigônê,
 Albeit thy mother suffered thee to leave
 Thy maiden-bower at thine entreaty, and mount 90
 The palace-roof to view the Argive host,
 Yet stay, that I may scan the highway first,

Lest on the path some citizen appear,
 And scandal light—for me, the thrall, 'twere nought,—
 On thee, the princess. This known, will I tell 95
 All that I saw, and heard from Argive men,
 When, to thy brother on truce-mission sent,
 I passed hence thither, and then back from him. . . .
 Nay, not a citizen draws nigh the halls.
 Climb with thy feet the ancient cedar-stair ; 100
 Gaze o'er the plain, along Ismenus' stream
 And Dirké's flow, on yon great host of foes.

ANTIGONE.

Stretch it forth, stretch it forth, the old man's hand,
 unto me
 The child, from the stair, and my feet upbear,
 As upward I strain.

OLD SERVANT.

Lo, maiden, grasp it : in good time thou com'st,
 For yon Pelasgian host is moving now.
 Battalion from battalion sundering.

ANTIGONE.

O Queen, O Child of Latona, Hekatè !
 Lo, how the glare of the brass flashes there
 Over all the plain ! 110

OLD SERVANT.

Ay, for not feebly Polyneikes comes
 With thunder of many a steed, with countless shields.

ANTIGONE.

Ah, be the gates secure, be the brass-clamped bolts
made sure

In the walls that Amphion in days bygone
Fashioned of stone ?

OLD SERVANT.

Fear not ; the city wards all safe within.
Mark yonder foremost chief, if thou wouldst know him.

ANTIGONE.

Who is he with the white helm-crest
Who marcheth in front of their war-array, 120
And a brazen buckler fencing his breast
Lightly his arm doth sway ?

OLD SERVANT.

A captain, princess.

ANTIGONE.

What his land, his birth ?
Make answer, ancient. What name beareth he ?

OLD SERVANT.

Yon chief proclaims him of Mycenian race :
By streams of Lerna King Hippomedon dwells.

ANTIGONE.

Ah me, how haughty, how fearful he is to see,
Like to a Giant, a child of Earth !
Star-blazonry gleams on his shield : not like is he
Unto one of mortal birth. 130

OLD SERVANT.

See'st thou not him who crosseth Dirkê's flood ?

ANTIGONE.

Of other, of stranger fashion his armour shows !
Who is he ?

OLD SERVANT.

Tydeus he, of Oineus' blood.
Aetolia's battle-fire in the breast of him glows.

ANTIGONE.

Is this he, ancient, by spousal-ties
Unto mine own Polyneikes allied,
Whose wife's fair sister he won for his bride ?
How half-barbaric his harness, of no Greek guise !

OLD SERVANT.

Nay, child, shield-bearers all Aetolians are,
And most unerring hurlers of the lance. 140

ANTIGONE.

And thou, how know'st thou, ancient, all so well ?

OLD SERVANT.

Even then I noted their shield-blazonry,
When to thy brother with truce-pact I fared :
I marked them, and I know their bearers now.

ANTIGONE.

Who is this by Zethus' sepulchre going,
With the keen, stern eyes and the curls long-flowing ?
A warrior young,
Yet a chief—for in armour brazen-glowing
See his followers throng !

OLD SERVANT.

Parthenopæus, Atalanta's son.

150

ANTIGONE.

Now may Artemis, over the mountains hasting
With his mother, smite with her bow, and in death lay
yon man low,
Who is hitherward come for my city's wasting !

OLD SERVANT.

So be it, child : yet for the right they come ;
Wherefore I dread lest God defend the right.

ANTIGONE.

And where is he whom the selfsame mother bore
With me, to a doom of travail sore ?
Dear ancient, where is Polyneikes, tell.

OLD SERVANT.

He standeth near Adrastus, near the tomb
Of Niobé's unwedded daughters seven. 160
See'st thou ?

ANTIGONE.

I see—not clearly—yet discern
Half-guessed, the outline of his frame and chest.
O that as wind-driven clouds swift-racing
I might speed with my feet through the air, and
light
By my brother, mine own, and with arms embracing
Might hold but his dear neck close-enfolden—
So long an exile in dolorous plight !
Lo, how he flasheth in armour golden,
Like the morning shafts of the sun bright-blazing !

OLD SERVANT.

Hither with joy to fill thee shall he come 170
By truce.

ANTIGONE.

But yon chief, ancient, who is he,
Car-borne, who sways the reins of horses white ?

OLD SERVANT.

The prophet Amphiaraus, Lady, is this.
With him are victims, Earth's blood-offerings.

ANTIGONE.

O Daughter of Leto the Queen of the radiant zone,¹
O Moon, thou golden-rounded gleam,
How calmly, how soberly ever he driveth on,
One after other goading his team !
And where is Kapaneus—he who hurls at Thebes 180
Outrage of threats ?

OLD SERVANT.

There :—he counts up and down
The wall-stones, gauging our towers' scaling-height.

ANTIGONE.

O Nemesis, O ye thunders rolling deep
Of Zeus, thou flaming light of his levin,
Overweening vaunts dost thou hush into endless sleep !
And is this the hero by whom shall be given

¹ According to MS. reading, "O Child of the Sun-god, the Lord of the radiant zone."

Into bondage to dames of Mycenæ the spear-won
daughters

Of Thebes,—to the Trident of Lerna, the fountain-
waters

Amymonian, at stroke of Poseidon that leapt,—

When his net of thraldom around them is swept ?

Never, ah never, O Artemis Queen, 190

Zeus' child, with the tresses of golden sheen,

Bowed under bondage may I be seen !

OLD SERVANT.

Daughter, pass in, and 'neath the roofs abide

Thy maiden bowers within ; for thy desire

Hast thou attained, even all thou fain wouldst see. 195

Lo, to the royal halls a woman-throng

Comes, now confusion through the town hath passed.

And scandal-loving still is womankind ;

For, so they find slight cause for idle talk,

More they invent. Strange pleasure women take 200

To speak of sister-women nothing good.

[*Exeunt Old Servant and Antigone.*

Enter Chorus.

CHORUS.

(*Str. 1*)

Afar from the tides against Tyre's walls swelling,

For Loxias chosen an offering,

From the Isle of Phœnicia I came, to be thrall

Unto Phœbus, to serve in his palace-hall

Where 'neath crags of Parnassus, with arrowy fall

Of the snow oversprent, he hath made him a dwelling.

O'er Ionian seas did it waft me, the wing

Of the oar, while the West-wind's chariot sped

Over the furrows unharvested 210

That from Sicily roughened ;—before him fled

Music, till all the heavens were telling
The glory of beauty his breathings bring.

(*Ant. 1*)

The choice of my city's virgin-flowers,
A gift of beauty to Loxias made,
To the land of the children of Kadmus we came,
To the sons of Agenor of ancient fame,
Hither brought to a people by lineage the same

With my fathers, even to Laius' towers.

But as gold-wrought statues to stand arrayed 220

For the service of Phœbus appointed we were ;

And Kastaly's fount yet waiteth us there,

That my maiden glory of shining hair

May be oversprayed by its hallowing showers

Ere for Phœbus's service its tresses I braid.

(*Mesode*)

Hail, rock that flashest a splendour of light
From the cloven tongue of thy flame o'er the height

Of the Bacchic peak Dionysus haunteth !

Hail, vine that with each morn offerest up

Thy giant cluster to brim the cup 230

That never the mystic ritual wanteth !¹

Hail, cavern revered where the Dragon abode !

Hail, watchtower scour of the Archer-god !

Hail, snow-smitten ridges by mortal untrod !

O that the wreaths of the dance I were weaving,

With soul unafraid, to the Goddess undying,

These fear-stricken waters of Dirke leaving

For Apollo's dells² by the world's heart lying !

¹ In Bacchus' temple on Parnassus was a vine which was said to yield one ripe cluster daily, to furnish the libation for the God.

² *Al.* "shrines."

(Str. 2)

But this day before the wall
 Furious Arês comes ; his hand 240
 Lights for Thebes the slaughter-brand—
 God forefend his will befall !
 Friend with friend is one in pain ;
 And Phœnicia with all bane
 Of the stately-towered land
 Shall condole, a mourning nation.
 One our lineage, one our blood ;
 All be hornèd Io's brood :¹
 Mine is all your tribulation.

(Ant. 2)

Round the town a shield-array 250
 Cloudlike flashes levin-light—
 Grim presentment of red fight !
 Yet shall Arês rue the day²
 If the Avengers' curse he bring
 On the sons of that blind king.
 Argos, thy Pelasgian might
 Dread I, and the hand of heaven !
 For the strife of him who comes
 Mail-clad to the ancient homes
 Shall with Justice' help be striven. 260

Enter Polyneikes.

POLYNEIKES.

Lightly, too lightly, have the warders' bolts
 Made way for me to pass within the walls.
 Wherefore I fear lest, once within their net,

¹ Kadmus, founder of Thebes, and Agenor, founder of Tyre, were both descendants of Io.

² *i.e.* Shall see the defeat of those whose leader he is.

They shall not let me 'scape but with my blood.
 Needs must I then turn every way mine eye 265
 Hither and thither, lest some treachery lurk.
 Mine hand with this blade armed shall give to me
 The assurance of a desperate courage born.
 Ha ! who goes there ?—or fear I but a sound ?
 All perilous seems to them that venture all, 270
 Soon as their feet are set on hostile soil.
 Yet do I trust my mother—and mistrust,—
 Who drew me to come hither under truce.
 But help is nigh ; for lo, the altar-hearth
 At hand ; nor void the palace is of folk. 275
 Into its dark sheath let me plunge my sword,
 And ask these by the palace who they be.
 Ye alien women, say, from what far land
 Unto the homes of Hellas are ye come ?

CHORUS.

Phœnician was the land that fostered me. 280
 Agenor's sons' sons sent me hitherward
 To Phœbus, firstfruits of their battle-spoil.
 When Oedipus' famed son would speed me on
 To Loxias' awful oracle and hearths,
 Even then the Argives marched against the town. 285
 But thou, make answer, who art thou that com'st
 Into this fortress of seven-gated Thebes ?

POLYNEIKES.

Oedipus, son of Laius, was my sire ;
 Menoikeus' child Jocasta gave me birth ;
 And me the Theban folk Polyneikes name. 290

CHORUS.

O kinsman thou of old Agenor's race,

My rulers, who forth sent me to this place !—
 Low on my knees in obeisance I fall,
 After the wont of my people, O king !
 Thou art come at the last—to the land of thy fathers
 comest thou !
 What ho, queen, ho ! fare forth of the hall !
 Wide let the palace-portals swing.
 Mother that barest him, hear'st thou my call ?
 Why dost thou linger to pass from thine high-roofed
 bowers now, [300
 And around thy son with thine arms to cling ?

Enter Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

Your Tyrian accents ringing clear
 Smote, O ye maidens, on mine ear,
 And lo, my tottering feet, for eld slow-trailed, draw near.
Catches sight of Polyneikes.

(*Str.*)

O my son, I behold
 Thy face at the last,
 After days untold,
 O my son !—now cast
 Thine arms round thy mother, and bosom to bosom
 enfold me fast.

Stoop to me, stoop,
 Dear face, from above !
 Let the dark head droop
 The tresses thereof,
 Overshadowing my neck with its clustering curls, with
 the banner of love.

(Ant.)

Hopes, dreams, they were past 310

As a tale that is told ;

Yet thou comest at last

For mine arms to enfold !

What shall I say to thee ?—how shall I grasp it, the
rapture of old ?

By assurance of word,

Or by hands that embrace,

Or by feet that are stirred,

Or by body that sways,

Hitherward, thitherward, tossed as the dance inter-
twineth its maze ?

Ah son, thy father's desolate home forsaking,

Wast thou by thine own brother's tyrannous wrong

Exiled !—for thee thy lovers' hearts were aching, 320

Thebes' heart for thee ached long.

Therefore my white hair have I shorn for mourning,

With weeping let it fall for thee, my son :

Of white robes disarrayed, for all adorning

These night-hued rags I don ;

While in our halls the sightless ancient, ever

Yearning and weeping o'er that noble twain

Whom from home's yoke of love did hatred sever,

Rushed, eager to be slain 330

By his own hand, with sword, with noose down-trailing

From rafters dim,—now groaning o'er the doom

His malison brought on you, ever wailing

With anguish, hides in gloom.

But thou, my son, men say, hast made affiance
 With strangers : children gotten in thine halls
 Gladden thee, yea, thou soughtest strange alliance ! 340
 Son, on thy mother falls

Thine alien bridal's curse to haunt her ever.
 Thee shall a voice from Laius' grave accuse.
 The spousal torch for thee I kindled never,
 As happy mothers use ;

Nor for thy bridal did Ismenus bring thee
 Joy of the bath ; nor at the entering-in
 Of this thy bride did Theban maidens sing thee.
 A curse be on that sin,¹ 350

Whether of steel's spell,² strife-lust, or thy father
 It sprang, or whether revel of demons rose
 In halls of Oedipus !—on mine head gather
 All tortures of these woes.

CHORUS.

Mighty with women is their travail's fruit ; 355
 Yea, dear the child is to all womankind.

POLYNEIKES.

Wisely, and yet not wisely, have I come,
 Mother, mid foes : yet all men are constrained
 To love their fatherland ; who saith not so,
 Sporteth with words, his heart is elsewhere. 360

¹ The fratricidal strife between Eteokles and Polyneikes.

² "For the steel of itself hath a spell, and it draweth men on unto war."—*Odyssey*, xix, 13.

In such misgiving came I, in such dread
Lest treachery slay me, of my brother framed,
That through the city sword in hand I passed,
Aye keenly glancing round. One stay I had ;—
The truce and thy fair faith drew me within 365
These walls ancestral. Full of tears I came,
So late to see home, altars of the Gods,
The athlete-stead that trained me, Dirکہ's spring,
Whence banished wrongfully, in a strange town
I dwell, mine eyes a fountain ever of tears. 370
Thee too, for sorrow's crown of sorrow, I see
With shaven head, and in dark mourning robes
Clad—woe is me for my calamities !
Mother, how dire is strife betwixt near kin,
How hopeless reconciliation is ! 375
What doth mine ancient father in his halls,
Whose light is dark ? What of my sisters twain ?
Do these bemoan mine exile's misery ?

JOCATA.

Foully doth some God ruin Oedipus' line.
Thus it began—I bare forefended issue ; 380
Wed under curse thy sire,—and thou wast born !
Yet wherefore this ? The Gods' will must we bear.
But how to ask the thing I would I fear,
Lest I should gall thy soul, yet long for this.

POLYNEIKES.

Nay, ask ; leave no desire unsatisfied ; 385
For, mother, that thou wouldst is dear to me.

JOCATA.

First, then, I ask thee that I fain would learn.
What meaneth exile ? Is it a sore ill ?

POLYNEIKES.

The sorest. In deed sorer than in word.

JOCASTA.

In what wise ? Where for exiles lies its sting ? 390

POLYNEIKES.

This most of all—a curb is on the tongue.

JOCASTA.

That is the slave's lot, not to speak one's thought !

POLYNEIKES.

The unwisdom of his rulers must one bear.

JOCASTA.

Hard this, that one partake in folly of fools !

POLYNEIKES.

Yokes nature loathes must be for profit borne. 395

JOCASTA.

Yet hopes be exiles' meat, so runs the saw.

POLYNEIKES.

Hopes look with kind eyes, yet they long delay.

JOCASTA.

But doth not time lay bare their emptiness ?

POLYNEIKES.

Ah, but sweet witchery mid ills have they !

JOCASTA.

Whence wast thou fed, ere marriage brought thee substance ? 400

POLYNEIKES.

Whiles had I daily bread, and whiles had not.

JOCASTA.

Helped they not thee, thy father's friends and guests ?

POLYNEIKES.

Prosper :—friends vanish if thou prosper not.

JOCASTA.

Did high birth bring thee not to high estate ?

POLYNEIKES.

A curse is penury. Birth fed me not. 405

JOCASTA.

Most dear, meseems, to men is fatherland.

POLYNEIKES.

How dear, thou couldst not even utter it.

JOCASTA.

To Argos how cam'st thou ? With what intent ?

POLYNEIKES.

I know not. Heaven to my fate summoned me.

JOCASTA.

Wise is the God. How didst thou win thy bride ? 410

POLYNEIKES.

To Adrastus Loxias spake an oracle.

JOCASTA.

What was it? How mean'st thou? I cannot guess.

POLYNEIKES.

"Thy daughters wed to a lion and a boar."

JOCASTA.

Son, with a brute's name what hadst thou to do?

POLYNEIKES.

'Twas night: to Adrastus' palace-porch I came. 415

JOCASTA.

Seeking a couch?—or but as exiles roam?

POLYNEIKES.

Even that. Another exile thither came.

JOCASTA.

Who? In what hapless plight was he withal?

POLYNEIKES.

Tydeus, who sprang, men say, of Oineus' loins.

JOCASTA.

Why to Adrastus seemed ye as wild beasts? 420

POLYNEIKES.

For that we fell to fighting for our couch.

JOCASTA.

Then Talaus' son read right the oracle ?

POLYNEIKES.

Yea—to us twain gave his young daughters twain.

JOCASTA.

Blest or blest, then, art thou in thy bride ?

POLYNEIKES.

Unto this day I find no fault in her. 425

JOCASTA.

How didst thou win yon host to follow thee ?

POLYNEIKES.

To his two daughters' husbands swore Adrastus,
Tydeus and me,—my marriage-kinsman he,—
To bring both home from exile, me the first.
And many a Danaan and Mycenian chief 430
Is here—a needful, yet a mournful grace

To me, for I against my country march.
And, by the Gods I swear, unwillingly
I lift the spear against my best-beloved.
But with thee rests the assuaging of these ills, 435
Mother, to set at one those one in blood,
And end mine, thine, and all the city's toils.

Old is the saw, yet will I utter it :—
Wealth in men's eyes is honoured most of all,
And of all things on earth hath chiefest power. 440

Captaining countless spears for this I come ;
For the high-born in poverty is naught.

CHORUS.

Lo, unto parley Eteokles comes.
Mother Jocasta, thine the task to speak
Words whereby thou shalt set thy sons at one. 445

Enter Eteokles.

ETEOKLES.

Here am I, mother—all for grace to thee
I come. What needs to do? Be speech begun.
For I have stayed from marshalling round the walls
The close-linked cordon of defence, to hear
Thy mediation for the which thou hast wrought 450
On me to admit this man within our walls.

JOCASTA.

Forbear : haste brings not justice in its train :
But slow speech winneth oftenest wisdom's end.
Refrain fierce look and passion's stormy breath :
The Gorgon's severed head thou seest not : 455
Thou seest thine own brother hither come.
And thou, unto thy brother turn thy face,
Polyneikes ; for, if thou but meet his eye,
Thou shalt the better speak, and hear his words.
Fain would I wisely counsel thee, and thee. 460
When he whose wrath is hot against his friend
Cometh to meet him, standeth eye to eye,
Let him look only at that for which he came,
And cherish no remembrance of old wrongs.
Son Polyneikes, be the first word thine, 465
For thou hast brought yon host of Danaus' sons,
Wronged, as thou pleadest. Now be some God judge
Hereof, and reconciler of these ills.

POLYNEIKES.

Plain and unvarnished is the tale of truth,
And justice needs no subtle sophistries : 470
Itself hath fitness ; but the unrighteous plea,
Having no soundness, needeth cunning salves.
I had regard unto my father's house,
My weal, and this man's : fain to 'scape the curse
Uttered of Oedipus against us once, 475
Of mine own will I went from this realm forth,
And left him one year's round to rule our land,
Myself in turn to take the sovereignty,
And not in hate and bloodshed clash with him,
And do and suffer ill—as now befalls. 480
And he consented, in the Gods' sight swore,
Yet no whit keepeth troth, but holdeth still
The kingship and mine half the heritage.
Now ready am I, so I receive mine own,
Forth from this land to send my war-array, 485
To take mine house, in turn therein to dwell,
And for like space to yield it him again,
And not to waste my fatherland, nor bring
Assault of scaling-ladders to her towers,
Which, save I win my right, will I essay 490
To do. I call the Gods to witness this—
That, wholly dealing justly, robbed am I
Of fatherland, unjustly, impiously.
These things have I said, mother, point by point,
Not wrapped in webs of words, but, in the eyes 495
Of wise or simple, naked right, meseems.

CHORUS.

To me—albeit Hellas nursed me not,
Yet to me soundly seemest thou to plead.

ETEOKLES.

Were wisdom gauged alike of all, and honour,
 No strife of warring words were known to men. 500
 But no men judge alike, no men agree,
 Save touching names ; no being hath the deed.¹
 Yea, mother, nothing feigning will I speak :—
 I would mount to the risings of the stars
 Or sun, would plunge 'neath earth, if this I could, 505
 So to win Power, diviner than all gods.
 This precious thing, my mother, will I not
 Yield to another, when myself might keep.
 No man's part this, to let the better slip [510
 And grasp the worse ! Nay more—I think foul shame
 That *he* should come with arms, lay waste the land,
 And win his heart's desire. This were reproach
 To Thebes, if I, by spear Mycenian cowed,
 Should yield my sceptre up for him to hold.
 With arms should he not come in quest of peace, 515
 Mother ; for parley can accomplish all
 That even steel of foes can bring to pass.
 If he on other terms will dwell in Thebes,
 That may he. *This* consent I not to yield.
 I, who may rule, shall I be thrall to him ? 520
 Wherefore let fire have way, let swords have way,
 Yoke ye the steeds, with chariots fill the plains :—
 I will not render him my sovereignty.
 If wrong may e'er be right, for a throne's sake [525
 Were wrong most right :—be God in all else feared !

¹ Paley, reading *ὀνομάσαι*, interprets

“ But fairness nor equality men regard,
 Save so to name them ; no such thing exists.”

CHORUS.

Befits not fair speech glozing deed unfair :
Not fair it is, but an offence to justice.

JOCASTA.

My son Eteokles, evil unalloyed
Cleaves not to old age : nay, experience
Can plead more wisely than the lips of youth. 530
Why at Ambition, worst of deities,
Son, graspest thou ? Do not : she is Queen of Wrong.
Homes many and happy cities enters she,
And leaves for ruin of her votaries.
Thou art mad for her !—better to honour, son, 535
Equality, which knitteth friends to friends,
Cities to cities, allies unto allies.
Man's law of nature is equality,
And the less, ever marshalled foe against
The greater, ushers in the dawn of hate. 540
Measures for men Equality ordained,
Meting of weights and number she assigned.
The sightless face of night, and the sun's beam
Equally pace along their yearly round,
Nor either envieth that it must give place. 545
Sun, then, and night are servants unto men.
Shalt thou not brook to halve your heritage
And share with him ? . . . Ah, where is justice then ?
Wherefore dost thou prize lordship overmuch,— [550
A prosperous wrong,—and count it some great thing ?
Is worship precious ? Nay, 'tis vanity.
Wouldst have, with great wealth in thine halls, great
travail ?
What is thy profit ?—profit but in name ;

Seeing enough sufficeth for the wise.

Mortals hold their possessions not in fee : 555

We are but stewards of the gifts of God :

Whene'er he will, he claims his own again.

And wealth abides not, 'tis but for a day.

Come, if I set two things before thee, and ask [560

"Wouldst thou be lord or saviour of thy Thebes?"

Wilt thou say, "Lord?" But if this man prevail,

And Argos' spears bear down Kadmean might,

Then conquered shalt thou see this city of Thebes,

And many captive maidens shalt thou see

Dishonoured with foul outrage by the foe. 565

Then were the wealth, that thou dost covet, made

Anguish to Thebes Ah me ! ambitious still !

This to thee : and to thee, Polyneikes, this :—

A foolish grace Adrastus did to thee ;

Madly thou too hast marched to ravage Thebes. 570

Come, if thou smite this land,—which God forbid,—

'Fore heaven, how wilt thou set Zeus' trophies up ?

How sacrifice for fatherland o'ercome ?

And how at Inachus' streams inscribe the spoils—

"*Polyneikes hath burnt Thebes, and to the Gods* 575

Offers these shields ?" Never, my son, be thine

To win from lips of Hellenes such renown !

But, he triumphant, vanquished thou, to Argos

How canst thou come, here leaving myriads dead ?

And one shall say, "O cursed betrothal made 580

By thee, Adrastus ! For one bridal's sake

We are ruined !" Evils twain thou draw'st on
thee,—

There, to lose all, here, fail mid thine emprise.

Forbear, forbear your vehemence ! When meet

Two headstrong fools, the issue is foulest ill. 585

CHORUS.

Ah Gods, be ye averters of these ills,
And set at one the sons of Oedipus !

ETEOKLES.

Mother, 'tis too late for parley ; nay, the time in dallying
spent

Doth but run to waste, nor aught availeth this thy good
intent. [590

Never shall we be at one, except as I have laid it down,
That in lordship over Thebes I sway the sceptre, wear
the crown.

Have thou done with tedious admonitions then, and let
me be :

And, for thee, thou get thee forth these walls, ere death
shall light on thee.

POLYNEIKES.

Death ?—of whom ?—what man so woundless, as to
plunge his murderous sword [595

Into this my body, and not win himself the like reward ?

ETEOKLES.

Nigh he is : not far thou standest : lo, these hands—
hast eyes to see ?

POLYNEIKES.

Yea—and know how clings to life that craven thing,
prosperity !¹

¹ Intimating that Eteokles has (as commonly happens with kings) too much to lose to be willing to risk it in a personal encounter.

ETEOKLES.

Yet against a battle-blender thou must lead yon huge
array !

POLYNEIKES.

Yea, for better than the reckless is the prudent captain
aye.

ETEOKLES.

Safe behind the truce, from death that screens thee,
vaunting dost thou stand !

600

POLYNEIKES.

Once again I claim of thee my crown, my share of
fatherland.

ETEOKLES.

Nought to me are claims : for I will dwell in this mine
house—mine own.

POLYNEIKES.

Grasping more than thine is ?

ETEOKLES.

Ay !—now get thee forth the land—begone !

POLYNEIKES.

Altars of our Gods ancestral,—

ETEOKLES.

Whom to ravage thou art come !

POLYNEIKES.

Hear me !—

605

ETEOKLES.

Who shall hearken thee, who bringest war against
thine home ?

POLYNEIKES.

And ye temples of the Gods of Stainless Steeds !—

ETEOKLES.

Who loathe thy name !

POLYNEIKES.

I am banished from my country !—

ETEOKLES.

He that to destroy it came.

POLYNEIKES.

Wrongfully, ye Gods !

ETEOKLES.

To Gods not here, but at Mycenæ, cry.

POLYNEIKES.

Impious art thou—

ETEOKLES.

Yea ?—but not my country's foe, as thou, am I.

POLYNEIKES.

Who dost drive me forth defrauded !

ETEOKLES.

Death withal I'll deal to thee. 610

POLYNEIKES.

Father, hear'st thou what I suffer ?

ETEOKLES.

Nay, thy *doings* heareth he.

POLYNEIKES.

And thou, mother ?

ETEOKLES.

That thou name our mother, sacrilege it were.

POLYNEIKES.

O my city !

ETEOKLES.

Hence to Argos : call on Lerna's water there.

POLYNEIKES.

Fret thee not—I go. I thank thee, mother.

ETEOKLES.

Forth the city ! Go !

POLYNEIKES.

Forth I go : yet on my father let me look !

ETEOKLES.

Thou see him ! No ! 615

POLYNEIKES.

Nay then, but my maiden sisters.

ETEOKLES.

These thou never more shalt see.

POLYNEIKES.

O my sisters !

ETEOKLES.

Why dost call on these, their bitterest enemy ?

POLYNEIKES.

Farewell, O my mother !

JOCASTA.

Sooth, my son, in gladness well I fare !

POLYNEIKES.

Son of thine no more !—

JOCASTA.

For many a sorrow me my mother bare !

POLYNEIKES.

Since he doth me foul despite !

ETEOKLES.

For foul despite received, I wis ! 620

POLYNEIKES.

Where before the towers wilt plant thee ?

ETEOKLES.

Wherefore dost thou question this ?

POLYNEIKES.

I will face thee there to slay thee.

ETEOKLES.

Ha ! I long to have it so !

JOCASTA.

Woe is me ! what will ye do, my sons ?

POLYNEIKES.

The issue's self shall show.

JOCASTA.

Flee, O flee your father's curses !

ETEOKLES.

All our house let ruin seize !

POLYNEIKES.

Soon my sword, blood-reddened, shall abide no more in
deedless ease. 625

But I call to witness earth that nursed me, witness
Gods in heaven,

How with shame and piteous usage from the home-
land I am driven,

Like a bondman, not a son of very Oedipus that came.
City, whatsoe'er befall thee, blame not me : yon tyrant
blame.

Willingly I came not, from the land am cast un-
willingly. 630

Farewell, Phœbus, Highway-king, O palace-bowers,
farewell ye !

Friends of youth, farewell, and statues of the Gods
where sheep are slain !

For I know not if to me 'tis given to speak to you again.
But my hope not yet doth sleep, wherein I trust, with
Gods to aid,

Him to slay, and hold the land of Thebes beneath my
sceptre swayed. 635

ETEOKLES.

Get thee forth ! Ha, truly Polyneikes, " Man of many
a feud,"

Named thy father thee, with heavenly prescience of thy
feuds endued !

[*Exit Polyneikes.*

CHORUS.

(*Str. 1*)

To this land from Phœnicia Kadmus speeding
Came, till the heifer unbroken, leading

The wanderer, cast her to earthward, telling 640
That so was accomplished the oracle spoken

When the God for the place of his rest gave token,

Bidding take the Aonian plains for his dwelling,
Where the golden spears of the wheat-ranks quiver,

Where the outgushing flood of the lovely river

Forth flashes from fountains of Dirke welling

Over meadows and tilth-lands harvest-teeming,

Where sprang from the spousals levin-gleaming

Of Zeus, the God of the shout wild-ringing ;¹ 650

¹ Bacchus, born of Semelê in the hour when she was consumed by the lightnings amid which Zeus appeared to her. The infant god was hidden among ivy from the vengeance of Hera.

And the ivy arching its bowers around him,
 With the fairy chains of its greenness bound him,
 To the babe with its sudden tendrils clinging,
 Overmantling with shadow the Blessing-laden,
 For a theme of the Bacchanal dance unto maiden
 Of Thebes, and to matron evoë-singing.

(*Ant.* 1)

There on the hallowed fountain's border
 Was the dragon of Ares, a ruthless warder ;
 And the glare of his eyeballs fearful-flashing
 Wandered in restless-roving keenness [660
 O'er the brimming runnels, the mirrored greenness :
 Then came to the spring for the lustral washing
 Kadmus, and hurled at the monster, and slew it ;
 For he snatched a boulder, his strong arm threw it
 Down on the head of the slaughterer crashing.

Then, of Pallas, the motherless Goddess, bidden,
 O'er the deep-furrowed earth, in her breast to be hidden,
 He scattered the teeth from the grim jaws parted.
 And the travailing glebe flung up bright blossom 670
 Of mail-clad warriors over the bosom
 Of the earth : but slaughter the iron-hearted
 Again with the earth their mother blent them,
 And drenched with their blood the breast which had sent
 them

Forth, when to sun-quicken'd air they upstart.¹

¹ Kadmus, after slaying the dragon-warder of the fountain of Dirکہ, sowed its teeth, from which a crop of armed men at once arose. He cast a stone amongst them, and they straightway attacked each other, and fought till five only were left. These followed Kadmus, and became the fathers of the indigenous Thebans, the "Sown Men," as they styled themselves.

(Str. 2)

Unto thee too, Epaphus, scion
 Of our first mother Io, I moan,
 Unto thee, of our lord Zeus sprung,
 With my alien chant upflung
 And with prayers of an alien tongue ! 680
 Thy sons, who reared Thebes to thee, cry on
 Their father—O come to thine own !

(Ant. 2)

For Demeter, Persephonê, wearing
 Twin names, have our land in ward—
 Even gracious Demeter All-queen,
 Who is Earth, nurse of all that hath been,—
 O send them, thy people to screen
 From the evil, the Queens Torch-bearing !—
 Is there aught for the Gods too hard ?

ETEOKLES (*to attendant*).

Go thou, and Kreon bring, Menoikeus' son, 690
 Who is my mother's, even Jocasta's brother.
 This tell him, that I would commune with him
 Touching our own advantage and the land's,
 Ere we go battleward and range the spears.
 But lo, he cometh, sparing thy foot's toil. 695
 Myself behold him drawing nigh mine halls.

Enter Kreon.

KREON.

Seeking to see thee, far I have wended, King
 Eteokles ; round to all Kadmean gates
 And guards, still searching for thy face, I passed.

ETEOKLES.

Sooth, Kreon, fain was I to look on thee : 700

For little worth I found his terms of peace,
When I for parley Polyneikes met.

KREON.

Beyond Thebes his ambition soars, I hear,
By Adrastus' kinship, and his host, puffed up. [705
But these things in the Gods' hands must we leave.
Of our main stumblingblock I came to tell.

ETEOKLES.

What shall this be? Thy drift is dark to me.

KREON.

A captive from the Argive host is come.

ETEOKLES.

What tidings bringeth he of dealings there?

KREON.

That Argos' host will straightway wind the net 710
Of arms round Kadmus' burg, all round her towers.

ETEOKLES.

Then Kadmus' burg must lead forth her array,—

KREON.

Whither? Sees not thy rash youth what it should?

ETEOKLES.

Across yon trenches, as to fight forthwith.

KREON.

Small is the host of this land, countless theirs. 715

ETEOKLES.

I know them for tongue-valiant warriors.¹

KREON.

Argos hath high repute mid Hellas' sons.

ETEOKLES.

Fear not : their slaughter soon shall load the plain.

KREON.

That would I : yet herein I see grim toil.

ETEOKLES.

Not I will pen mine host within the walls ! 720

KREON.

Yet wholly in good counsel victory lies.

ETEOKLES.

Wouldst thou I turned me unto other paths ?

KREON.

Any path, ere on one cast all be staked.

ETEOKLES.

How if by night we fall on them from ambush ?

KREON.

Yea,—if, miscarrying, safe thou mayst return. 725

ETEOKLES.

Night equals all, yet helps the venturous most.

¹ *Al.* "I know them by repute right valorous."

KREON.

Yet, for ill-speed, night's gloom is terrible.

ETEOKLES.

Shall I make onset even as they sup ?

KREON.

A brief alarm :—'tis victory we need.

ETEOKLES.

Dirkê's deep ford should hamper their retreat. 730

KREON.

Nought were so good as ward us warily.

ETEOKLES.

How, if our horse charge down on Argos' host ?

KREON.

There too their lines be fenced with chariots round.

ETEOKLES.

What shall I do then ?—yield our town to foes ?

KREON.

Never. Take thought, if prudent chief thou art,— 735

ETEOKLES.

What counsel is more prudent, then, than these ?

KREON.

Seven champions are there with them, have I heard,—

ETEOKLES.

Whereto appointed ? Seven men's might were small !

KREON.

To lead their bands to assail our seven gates.

ETEOKLES.

What then ? I wait not counsels of despair. 740

KREON.

Seven choose thou too to front them at the gates.

ETEOKLES.

To lead our bands, or fight with single spear ?

KREON.

To lead our bands : choose thou our mightiest ;—

ETEOKLES.

Ay so—to avert the scaling of the walls.

KREON.

And under-captains : one man sees not all. 745

ETEOKLES.

For valour chosen, or for prudent wit ?

KREON.

Nay, both : without its fellow, each is naught.

ETEOKLES.

This shall be. Now to the seven towers will I,

And plant chiefs, as thou biddest, at the gates,
Champion for champion, ranged against the foe. 750
To tell each o'er, were costly waste of time,
When foes be camped beneath our very walls.
But I will go, that mine hands loiter not.
God grant I meet my brother face to face, [755
Clash in the grapple, and slay him with the spear—
Slay him, who came to lay my country waste!
But, for Antigônê's marriage with thy son
Haimon,—if aught untoward hap to me,—
See thou to this. Their late betrothal-plight
Now, as I go forth, do I ratify. 760
Thou art my mother's brother ; why waste words ?
Give her fair nurture, for thy sake and mine.
My father hath wrought folly against himself,
Blinding his eyes ;—scant praise of mine he hath ;—
And us his curse shall slay, if so it hap. 765
One thing abides undone, to ask the seer
Teiresias touching this, if aught he hath
Of oracles to tell ; and I will send
Thy son Menoikeus, of thy father named,
Kreon, to bring Teiresias hitherward. 770
With a good will shall he commune with thee :
But the seer's art in time past have I mocked
Unto his face ; so he may bear me grudge.
This, Kreon, is mine hest to Thebes and thee :—
If my cause conquer, never bury ye 775
Polyneikes' corpse upon this Theban soil.
Who buries him—though closest friend—must die.
This to thee :—to mine henchmen now I speak.
Bring forth mine arms, mine harness-panoply,
That to the imminent conflict of the spear 780
I may set forth, with Right to crown mine arms.

To Heedfulness, of all Gods helpfullest,
That she will save this city, now we pray.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Ares the troublous, O whence is thy passion
For blood and for death, unattuned to the feasts of the
Revelry-king ?

Not for the dances, the circlings of beauty, in virginal
fashion

Tossed are thy tresses abroad, nor to breathings of
flutes dost thou sing

A strain to whose witchery dances are wreathing :
But with clangour of harness of fight through the
Argive array art thou breathing

War-lust for the blood of our Thebes athirst, 790

As thou ledest the dance of a revel accurst

Where no flutes ring.

Thou art found not where fawnskin and thyrsus in
mad reel mingle and sunder,

But with chariots and clashing of bits and with war-
horses' footfall of thunder

By Ismenus' brimming marge

With the rushing of steeds dost thou charge,

Into Argives breathing the battle-hate

Against the sons of the Dragon-state ;

And with harness of brass and with targe,

Fronting our ramparts of stone, dost array

A host for the fray.

A fearful Goddess in sooth is Strife,

Of whose devising the troublous life

Of the Labdakid kings of the land is anguish-rife. 800

(Ant.)

Gorges mysterious of frondage, Cithæron
 Beast-haunted, O birth-bed of snows, O thou apple of
 Artemis' eye,
 Ah that thou ne'er hadst received him, the babe of
 Jocasta, to rear on
 Thy lap such a fosterling, Oedipus, thrust from his
 home as to die,
 Life-marked with the brooch-pin golden-looping !
 And O that the portent, the wings of the Sphinx from
 the mountain swooping,
 Down on the land for its woe had not come,
 The maiden that sang us a chant of doom,
 An untuneable cry,
 When with talons of feet and of hands on the ram-
 parts of Kadmus she darted,
 And bearing his offspring to sun-litten cloudland un-
 trodden departed,
 She whom Hades from dens of the dead 810
 Against Kadmus' children sped !
 But a new curse lights upon Thebes and her halls ;
 For 'twixt Oedipus' sons the hell-seed falls
 Of strife, and it blossometh red.
 For never may aught that is utter shame
 Bear honour's name ;
 Nay, nor the unblest spousal's fruit
 Are sons true-born, but with stain they pollute
 Their begetter, the stock that sprang from the self-
 same root.

(Epode)

Thou didst bear, O land, thou didst bear of old—
 For I heard, yea, I heard in mine home, in an alien
 tongue, the story—

From the dragon of crimson crest that battened on
beasts of the wold 820

A race of the seed of his teeth, to be Thebes' reproach
and her glory.

To Harmonia's bridal descended of yore¹
The children of Heaven; and Thebes' walls rose to
the harp's voice singing,

When the spell of Amphion's lyre fashioned towers for
her brows' enringing,

In the space 'twixt the rivers twain that pour
Out of Dirکہ, whose dews drift greenness, shedding
Life o'er the plain by Ismenus spreading.

And our ancestress Io of hornèd brows
Was mother of kings unto Kadmus' house.

Lo, how hath this city, through line on line 830

Of blessings unnumbered, attained to the height

Where the War-god's crowns of victory-might
Shine!

Enter Teiresias led by his daughter, with Menoikeus.

TEIRESIAS.

Lead on, my daughter: to my sightless feet

As eyes art thou, as star to mariners. 835

Hither, on even ground, plant thou my steps.

Guide, lest I stumble: strengthless is thy sire.

Guard in thy maiden hand the augury-lots

Which, when I marked the bodings of the birds,

In the holy seat I took, where I divine. 840

Thou child Menoikeus, son of Kreon, tell

How much remaineth of the townward way

¹ Harmonia, daughter of Ares, was given by the Gods to Kadmus to wife.

To where thy father waits. Faint wax my knees ;
Journeying so long, scarce have I strength to go.

KREON.

Take heart, Teiresias, thou art nigh thy friends, 845
And thy foot's anchorage. Grasp his hand, my child.
Mule-car and agèd foot alike are wont
To await the upbearing of another's hand.¹

TEIRESIAS.

Here am I. Why this instant summons, Kreon ?

KREON.

We have not forgotten. Gather strength, regain 850
Thy breath, cast off thy journey's toil and strain.

TEIRESIAS.

Sooth am I spent with toil, brought hitherward
But yesterday from King Erechtheus' folk.
There too was war, against Eumolpus' spear,
Where I to Kekrops' sons gave victory. 855
This crown of gold, as thou mayst see, have I
As firstfruits of the foemen's spoils received.

KREON.

I take thy triumph-crown for omen fair ;
For we are, as thou knowest, in mid-surge
Of Danaïd war, and Thebes must wrestle hard. 860
King Eteokles, clad in war-array,

¹ The mule-car was used by ladies, who required (*cf.* *Electra*, 999, and *Iph. Aul.*, 617) a supporting hand in alighting, just as the old man did in walking.

Even now is gone to face Mycenæ's might ;
But to me gave in charge to inquire of thee
What deeds of ours shall best deliver Thebes.

TEIRESIAS.

For Eteokles sealed my lips had been, 865
The oracles withheld :—since *thou* wouldst know,
I tell thee. Kreon, long this land hath ailed
Since Laius in heaven's despite begat
Oedipus, his own mother's wretched spouse.
Yea, and the gory ruin of his eyes 870
Was heaven's device, for warning unto Greece.
And Oedipus' sons, who fain had cloaked it o'er
With time, as though they could outrun the Gods,
In folly erred : vouchsafing to their sire
Nor honour nor free air, they stung to fury 875
His misery : dread malison he breathed
Against them, suffering and shamed withal.
What did I not ? What warnings spake I not ?—
And had for guerdon hate of Oedipus' sons.
But nigh them, Kreon, mutual slaughter looms ; 880
And corpses many upon corpses piled—
Shafts Argive and Kadmean all confused—
With bitter wails shall dower the Theban land.
Thou, hapless town, art made a ruin-heap—
Except unto my bodings one give heed ! 885
This thing were best, that none of Oedipus' line
Remain in Thebes, nor citizen nor king :
They are fiend-possessed and doomed to wreck the
state.
But, seeing the evil hath o'erborne the good,
One other way of safety yet remains. 890
But this to tell, for me were all unsafe,

And bitter unto those whom fate endows
 With power to give their city safety's balm.
 I go. Farewell! What must befall will I—
 One midst a multitude—endure :—what help? 895
Turns to go.

KREON.

Abide here, ancient!

TEIRESIAS.

Lay not hold on me.

KREON.

Tarry: why flee?

TEIRESIAS.

Thy fortune flies, not I.

KREON.

Tell citizens and city safety's path.

TEIRESIAS.

Ay, fain art thou!—but loth thou soon shalt be.

KREON.

How?—not desire to save my fatherland? 900

TEIRESIAS.

Wouldst thou indeed hear? Art thou set thereon?

KREON.

Yea: whereunto more earnest should I be?

TEIRESIAS.

Then straightway shalt thou hear mine oracles.

But of this first would I be certified—
Where is Menoikeus, who hath led me hither ? 905

KREON.

He stands not far, but even at thy side.

TEIRESIAS.

Let him withdraw now from my bodings far.

KREON.

He is my son, will keep what must be secret.

TEIRESIAS.

Wilt thou indeed I speak before his face ?

KREON.

Yea ; of this safety gladly shall he hear. 910

TEIRESIAS.

Hear then the tenor of mine oracle,
What deed of yours shall save the Thebans' town.
Menoikeus must thou slay for fatherland,
Thy son—since thou thyself demandest fate.

KREON. [915

How say'st thou ? Ancient, what was this thy word ?

TEIRESIAS.

As hath been doomed, even this thou needs must do.

KREON.

Oh countless ills told in one little word !

TEIRESIAS.

Thine ills—but great salvation for thy land.

KREON.

I hearkened not !—heard not !—away, thou Thebes !

TEIRESIAS.

Not the same man is this : he flincheth now. 920

KREON.

Depart in peace : thy bodings need I not.

TEIRESIAS.

Is truth dead, for that thou art fortune-crost ?

KREON.

Oh, by thy knees, and by thy reverend hair !—

TEIRESIAS.

Why pray me ? Bow¹ to ills inevitable.

KREON.

Keep silence : to the city tell not this. 925

TEIRESIAS.

Thou bidd'st me sin : I will not hold my peace.

KREON.

What wilt thou do to me ?—wilt slay my son ?

TEIRESIAS. ,

Others shall see to that. 'Tis mine to speak.

¹ Reading *αἰνεῖ* vice *αἰρεῖ*, “ills inevitable thou cravest.”

KREON.

Whence came on me this curse, and on my son ?

TEIRESIAS.

Fair question and demand that I show cause. 930
In that den where the earth-born dragon lay
Watching the streams of Dirkê, must he yield,
Slaughtered, a blood-oblation to the earth ;
For Ares, nursing wrath 'gainst Kadmus long,
Now would avenge his earth-born dragon's death. 935
Do this, and Ares for your champion win.
If earth for seed gain seed, and human blood
For blood, then kindly shall ye prove the earth
Which once sent up a harvest golden-helmed
Of Sown-men. And it needeth that one die 940
Born of the lineage of the Dragon's Teeth.
And sole survivor art thou of the Sown
Of pure blood both on sire's and mother's side,
Thou and thy two sons. Haimon's spousals bar
His slaughter, for he is not virgin man. 945
Though sealed the rite be not, betrothed is he.
But this lad, to his city consecrate,
Dying, should yet redeem his fatherland,
And for Adrastus and the Argives make
Bitter return, their eyes with black death palled, 950
And make Thebes glorious. One of these two fates
Choose : either save the city, or thy son.
Now hast thou all my tale. Lead on, my child,
Homeward. Who useth the diviner's art
Is foolish. If he heraldeth ill things, 955
He is loathed of those to whom he prophesies.
If, pitying them that seek to him, he lie,

He wrongs the Gods. Sole prophet unto men
Ought Phœbus to have been, who feareth none.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

Why silent, Kreon, with lips held from speech ? 960
On me, too, consternation weighs no less.

KREON.

What should one say ?—But clear mine answer is :
Never such depth of misery will I seek,
As offer for my city a slaughtered son !
For love of children filleth all men's life, 965
And none to death would yield up his own child.
Let no man's praise lure me to slay my sons !¹
Myself—who have reached the ripeness of my years—
For death stand ready, to redeem my land.
But up, my child, ere all the city hear. 970
Heed not the reckless words of soothsayers :
But fly—with all speed get thee from the land !
To the seven gates, the captains, will he go,
And tell the rulers and the chieftains this.
Yet, may we but forestall him, thou art saved. 975
But if thou lag, undone we are—thou diest.

MENOIKEUS.

But whither flee ?—what city seek ?—what friend ?

KREON.

Where thou from this land's reach shalt farthest be.

¹ Reading κτείνειν. *Al.* κτείνον, "Let no man praise me while he slays my sons."

MENOIKEUS.

It best beseems that thou tell, I perform.

KREON.

Pass Delphi—

MENOIKEUS.

Whither, father, must I go? 980

KREON.

Unto Aetolia.

MENOIKEUS.

Whither journey thence?

KREON.

Thesprotia's soil.

MENOIKEUS.

Dodona's hallowed floor?

KREON.

Thou say'st.

MENOIKEUS.

What shall be my protection there?

KREON.

The God shall speed thee.

MENOIKEUS.

How supply my need?

KREON.

I will find gold.

MENOIKEUS.

Father, thou sayest well : 985
 Haste then. Unto thy sister will I go,—
 Jocasta, on whose bosom first I lay,
 Reft of my mother, left an orphan lone,—
 To bid her farewell, ere I flee for life.¹
 On then : pass in, be hindrance not in thee. 990

[*Exit Kreon.*]

Maidens, how well I have stilled my father's fear
 By guileful words, to attain the end I would !
 Me would he steal hence, robbing Thebes of hope,
 Branding me coward ! This might one forgive
 In age ; but no forgiveness should be mine 995
 If I betray the city of my birth.
 Doubt not but I will go and save the town,
 And give my soul to death for this land's sake.
 'Twere shame that men no oracles constrain,
 Who have not fall'n into the net of fate, 1000
 Shoulder to shoulder stand, blench not from death,
 Fighting before the towers for fatherland,
 And I, betraying father, brother, yea,
 My city, craven-like flee forth the land—
 A dastard manifest, where'er I dwell ! 1005
 By Zeus star-throned, by Ares, slaughter's lord,
 Who set on high in lordship over Thebes
 The Dragon-brood that cleft the womb of earth,
 Go will I, on the ramparts' height will stand,
 And o'er the Dragon's gloomy chasm-cave, 1010

¹ Reading *σώσω* for *σώσω* (Paley), "then I flee for life."

Whereof the seer spake, will I slay myself,
 And make my country free. The word is said.
 I go, to give my country no mean gift,
 My life, from ruin so to save the land :
 For, if each man would take his all of good, 1015
 Lavish it, lay it at his country's feet,
 Then fewer evils should the nations prove,
 And should through days to come be prosperous.
[Exit.

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Thou camest, camest, O thou wingèd doom,
 Fruit of Earth's travailing, 1020
 Begotten of the Worm of Nether-gloom,
 On Kadmus' sons to spring
 Death-fraught, and fraught with moanings for the dead,
 Half maiden, half brute-beast,
 Monster of roving pinions, talons red
 From that raw-ravening feast,
 Snatching from Dirکہ's meads her young men, shrieking
 O'er them thy dissonant knell,
 Anguish of slaughter on our country wreaking,
 Wreaking a curse-doom fell ! 1030
 Ah, murderous God, these ills for us who fashioned !
 Moanings of mothers filled
 The shuddering homes, and maidens' moanings pas-
 sioned :
 And wail to wail aye thrilled,
 And dirge to death-dirge, each to each replying
 The stricken city through—
 A nation's pang—as thunder pealed their crying, 1040
 As the winged maid with each new victim flying
 From earth, was lost to view.

(Ant.)

At last was Oedipus, woe-fated, bound
 From Pytho, hither led,—
 Our joy, but soon our grief,—who, triumph-crowned
 From that dark riddle read,
 Wretch, in ill bridal made his mother wife,
 Polluted Thebes, and banned 1050
 His sons to stain in this accursèd strife
 With brother-blood the hand.
 Praise to him, praise, who unto death is faring,
 Yea, for his land to die,
 Leaving to Kreon moans of love's despairing,
 But setting victory
 For crown upon the city seven-gated !
 Ah, may such noble son
 To bless mine happy motherhood be fated,
 O Pallas, gracious one !— 1060
 Pallas, of whom the sudden stone leapt, spilling
 The dragon-warder's blood :
 Thou gav'st the thought the heart of Kadmus thrilling
 To dare the deed whence rushed, with ravin filling
 The land, a God's curse-flood.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Ho there ! Who standeth at the palace-gate ?
 Open ye, bring Jocasta forth her bowers.
 Ho there, again ! Though late, yet come thou forth :
 Hearken, renowned wife of Oedipus ; 1070
 Cease from thy wailings and thy tears of grief.

Enter Jocasta.

JOCASTA.

Friend—friend !—thou com'st not sure with ill news
 fraught

Of Eteokles' death, by whose shield aye
Thou marchedst, warding him from foemen's darts?
What word of tidings bringest thou to me? 1075
Dead is my son, or liveth he?—declare.

MESSENGER.

He lives. Fear not! I rid thee so of dread.

JOCASTA.

And the seven towers, how fares the fence thereof?

MESSENGER.

They stand unshattered: Thebes not yet is spoiled.

JOCASTA.

Were they sore perilled of the Argive spear? 1080

MESSENGER.

At ruin's brink: but stronger proved the might
Of Kadmus' people than Mycenæ's spear.

JOCASTA.

One thing, by heaven!—of Polyneikes aught
Canst tell? I yearn for this! Doth he see light?

MESSENGER.

Liveth thus far thy chariot-yoke of sons. 1085

JOCASTA.

Blessings on thee! How did ye thrust the spear
Of Argos back from your beleaguered gates?
Tell, that I may rejoice the blind old man
The halls within, with news of this land saved.

MESSENGER.

When Kreon's son, who for his country died, 1090
Climbing a tower's height, had thrust the sword
Black-hafted through his throat to save the land,
Seven bands with captains to the seven gates,
For watch and ward against the Argive spear,
Thy son set, horsemen covering horsemen ranged, 1095
And men-at-arms behind the shield-bearers,
That, where the wall's defence failed, succour of spears
Might be hard by. Then from the soaring towers
We marked the white shields of the Argive host
Leaving Teumessus. Having neared the foss, 1100
Suddenly charging closed they on Kadmus' burg.
Then pæan swelled, and shattering trumpet shrilled,
All blended, from the foe and from the walls.
Parthenopaius, that famed huntress' son,
First led against the Gate Neïstian 1105
A squadron horrent all with serried shields,
On his mid-targe the blazon of his house,
Atalanta slaying the Aetolian boar
With shafts far-smiting. Against Proitus' Gate,
Slain victims on his chariot, marched the seer 1110
Amphiaraus, with no proud device,
But sober weapons void of blazonry.
The gates Ogygian King Hippomedon
Assailed, in mid-targe bearing for device
Argus, with gemmy eyes for aye at gaze, 1115
Some with the rising of the stars aglare,
While, as the stars set, some were slumber-veiled,
As might be seen thereafter, he being slain.
Against the Gate of Homolê Tydeus took
His stand, his shield draped with a lion's hide 1120

All shaggy-haired. Titan Prometheus bore
A torch in hand there, as to burn the town.
Thy son Polyneikes at the Fountain Gate
Led on the war. Upon his shield the steeds
Of Potniæ racing in fear-frenzy sprang, 1125
Wheeled round within by pivots cunningly
Hard by the hand-grip, that they seemed distraught.
High-stomached for the fight as Ares' self,
Led Kapaneus his troop to Electra's Gate ;
And, for his iron-faced buckler's blazonry, 1130
An earth-born giant on his shoulders bore
A whole town from its basement lever-wrenched,
As token for us of our city's fate.
And at the seventh gate Adrastus was,
His graven shield with five-score vipers thronged 1135
Swung on his left arm, even the Argive vaunt,
The Hydra ; and its serpents from our walls
Were snatching Kadmus' children in their jaws.
Each chief's device I well might mark, who bare
The watchword to the leaders of our bands. 1140
Then first with bows and thong-spied javelins
We battled, and with slings that smote from far,
And crashing stones. But when we 'gan prevail,
Suddenly shouted Tydeus and thy son :
" Sons of the Danaans, ere their bolts quell you, 1145
Why do ye tarry, onward-hurling all,
To assault their gates—light-armed, horse, chariot-
lords ? "
Soon as they heard that cry, was none hung back.
Many, with heads blood-dashed, were falling fast ;
And of us many earthward flung thou hadst seen 1150
Before the walls, like divers plunging, dead,
Drenching the thirsty soil with streams of gore.

But Atalanta's son—no Argive he—
Hurls like a whirlwind at the gates, and shouts
For fire and mattocks, as to raze the town. 1155
But his mid-fury Periklymenus stayed,
The Sea-god's son, who hurled a wain-load crag,
A battlement-coping, down upon his shield,
Spattered abroad the golden head, and rent [1160
The knittings of its bones : the cheeks dark-flushed
Dashed he with blood. No life shall he bear back
To his archer-mother, Maid of Mænalus.
Then, marking how at this gate all went well,
Passed to the next thy son, I following still.
There saw I Tydeus with his serried shields, 1165
With spears Aetolian javelining the height
Of the roofless towers, that from the rampart's crest
Ours fled in panic. But thy son again
Rallies them, as the hunter cheers his hounds ;
So manned the walls anew. To other gates 1170
On pressed we, having stayed the mischief there.
But how the madness tell of Kapaneus ?
For, grasping the long ladder's scaling rounds,
On came he, and thus haughtily vaunted he,
That not Zeus' awful fire should hold him back 1175
From razing from her topmost towers the town.
Thus crying, ever as hailed the stones on him,
He climbed, with body gathered 'neath his targe,
Aye stepping from smooth ladder-rung to rung.
But, even as o'er the ramparts rose his head, 1180
Zeus smiteth him with lightning : rang again
The earth, that all quailed. From the ladder flew
His limbs abroad wide-whirling slingstone-like :
Heavenward his hair streamed, earthward rained his
blood :

Hands, feet—Ixion on his wheel seemed he— 1185
Whirled round. To earth he fell, a blasted corpse.
Adrastus, seeing Zeus his army's foe,
Without the trench drew off the Argive host.
Then, marking Zeus's portent fair for us,
Forth of the gates our horse their chariots drave : 1190
Our footmen crashed through Argos' mid-array
With levelled spears ;—'twas turmoiled ruin all—
Men dying—falling o'er the chariot-rails—
Wheels leaping—axles upon axles dashed,
And corpses heaped on corpses all confused. 1195
So then for this day have we barred the fall
Of our land's towers ; but if good fortune waits
On Thebes henceforth, this resteth with the Gods.
Only a God's hand rescued her to-day.

CHORUS.

Glorious is victory : if more gracious yet 1200
The Gods' intent is, blessèd shall I be.

JOCASTA.

Fair are the dealings of the Gods and Fate :
For lo, my sons live, and the land hath 'scaped.
But Kreon hath, meseems, reaped evil fruit
Of mine and Oedipus' marriage—hapless sire, 1205
Reft of his son, for blessing unto Thebes,
But grief to him ! Take up the tale again,
And tell what now my sons are bent to do.

MESSENGER.

Forbear the rest. Thus far 'tis well with thee.

JOCASTA.

Thou stirr'st surmisings ! I can not forbear. 1210

MESSENGER.

How, wouldst thou more than know thy sons are safe ?

JOCASTA.

Yea, know if things to come be well for me.

MESSENGER.

Now let me go : thy son his henchman lacks.

JOCASTA.

Some ill thou hid'st—in darkness veilest it !

MESSENGER.

I would not tell thee evil blent with good. 1215

JOCASTA.

That shalt thou—except to heaven thou wing thy flight.

MESSENGER.

Alas ! why couldst thou let me not go hence
After good tidings, but wouldst have the ill ?
Thy two sons purpose single fight, apart
From all the host—a desperate deed of shame ! 1220
To Argives and Kadmeans one and all
They spake that which would God they had left unsaid !
Eteokles from a lofty tower began—
Having bid publish silence to the host—
And said : “ O battle-chiefs of Hellas-land, 1225
Lords of the Danaans who have hither come,
Sell not your lives for nought, nor yet for mine.
For I myself, of this risk freeing you,

Alone will with my brother grapple in fight. 1230
 If I slay him, mine halls I hold alone :
 O'erthrown, I yield the city up to him.¹
 Argives, forbear the struggle, and return
 Unto your land, not leaving here your lives ;
 And of the Sown suffice the already dead." 1235
 Thus spake he : Polyneikes then, thy son,
 Leapt from the ranks, and hailed the challenge-word ;
 And all the Argives shouted yea to this,
 And Kadmus' folk, as righteous in their eyes.
 On these terms made they truce, and in mid-space 1240
 Took oaths whereby the chieftains should abide.²
 Then ancient Oedipus' two sons straightway
 'Gan case their bodies in all-brazen mail,
 Holpen of friends ; by Theban lords the king
 Of this land, and by Danaan chiefs his brother. 1245
 There stood they gleaming,—never paled their cheeks,—
 Each panting at his foe to dart the spear.
 On this side and on that their friends drew nigh,
 With heartening words thus speaking unto them :
 "Thine, Polyneikes, is it to set up 1250
 Zeus' trophy-statue, and give Argos fame ;"
 To Eteokles—"Thou for Thebes dost fight :
 Now triumph, and thou hold'st her sceptre fast."
 So did they hail them, cheering them to fight.
 And the priests slew the sheep : flame-tongue they
 marked, 1255
 And flame-cleft, steamy reek that bodeth ill,

¹ Nauck's reading. Paley's, "I yield them up to him alone."

² Another reading, "The chiefs took oaths, whereby they should abide."

The pointed flame, which hath decisions twain,
Betokening victory or overthrow.
If any power thou hast, or cunning words,
Or spell of charms, go, pluck thou back thy sons 1260
From that dread strife; for grim the peril is,
And dread the guerdon :¹ tears shall be thy portion,
If thou of two sons be this day bereaved. [Exit.

JOCASTA.

Daughter Antigônê, come forth the house !
No dances, neither toils of maiden hands, 1265
Beseem thee in this hour of heaven's doom.
But heroes twain, yea, brethren unto thee,
Now deathward reeling, with thy mother thou
Must hold from dying, each by other slain.

Enter Antigônê.

ANTIGONE.

Mother that bare me, what strange terror-cry
Before these halls to thy friends utterest thou ? 1270

JOCASTA.

Daughter, thy brethren's life is come to nought.

ANTIGONE.

How say'st thou ?

JOCASTA.

Met they are for single fight.

ANTIGONE.

Woe ! what wilt say ?

¹ So Nauck ; according to Paley, " And, for dread guerdon, tears," etc.

JOCASTA.

Nought welcome. Follow me.

ANTIGONE.

Whither, from maiden-bowers ?

JOCASTA.

To the host. 1275

ANTIGONE.

I shrink from throngs !

JOCASTA.

Shamefastness cannot help thee !

ANTIGONE.

I—what can I do ?

JOCASTA.

Part thy brethren's strife.

ANTIGONE.

Mother, whereby ?

JOCASTA.

Fall at their feet with me.

ANTIGONE.

Lead to the mid-space ! We may tarry not.

JOCASTA.

Haste, daughter, haste : for, may I but forestall 1280

My sons ere fighting, light of life is mine.
If they be dead, dead with them will I lie.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Alas and alas !

Shuddering, shuddering horror of soul have I :

Through the very flesh of me pass

Compassion-thrills for a mother in misery.

Two sons—who, slain of the other, in blood shall lie ?

Woe, anguish, and dismay !

Zeus !—Earth !—to you I pray ! 1290

Throat of a brother pierced—a brother sped !—

Cleaving of shields, and blood of brethren shed !

Woe's me and well-a-day !

For whom shall I uplift my voice to wail him dead ?

(*Ant.*)

O land, O land !

Two ravening beasts, two spirits of murderous mood,

With the battle-lust quivering they stand ;

But full soon shall bedabble a fallen foe with blood !

Wretches, that ever on duel bent they stood ! 1300

With wail of alien tongue

Shall my wild dirge be sung,

Tears for the dead, and lamentation's cry.

Fate presseth nearer, murder is hard by,

In the sword's¹ balance hung :—

Curst slaughter, curst, the work of Vengeance-destiny !

Ha, 'tis Kreon I behold, that hitherward with clouded
brow

Hasteth to the palace. I will hush the wail begun
but now.

¹ Reading *ξίφος*.

Enter Kreon, with attendants bearing the body of Menoikeus.

KREON.

What shall I do? Weeping shall I bemoan 1310
 Myself, or Thebes whom such a cloud o'erpalls
 That she through Acheron's night is passing now?
 Dead is my son! He died for fatherland,
 Winning a glorious name, but woe for me.
 Him from the Dragon's crags but now I caught 1315
 Self-slain, and woefully bare him in mine arms.
 My whole house wails. I for my sister come,
 Jocasta,—come, the old to seek the old,—
 To bathe and lay out this no more my son.
 For he who hath not died must reverence 1320
 The Nether-gods by honouring the dead.

CHORUS.

Gone is thy sister, Kreon, forth the house;
 And with her went her child Antigônê.

KREON.

Whither?—for what mischance?¹ Declare to me.

CHORUS.

The purpose of her sons she heard, to fight 1325
 In single combat for the royal halls.

KREON.

How sayest thou? Lo, tending my son's corse,
 I came not to the knowledge of this deed.

¹ Kreon's mental attitude, through which he forebodes evil everywhere (cf. 1311-12), countenances this rendering, though *συμφορά* does not necessarily mean more than "occurrence."

CHORUS.

Yea, hence thy sister parted long ago :
And that death-struggle, Kreon, now, meseems, 1330
Is ended 'twixt the sons of Oedipus.

KREON.

Ah me ! a token yonder do I see,
The joyless eye and face of one who comes
A messenger, to tell whate'er is done.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Woe is me ! what story can I tell, or utter forth what
wail ?¹ 1335

KREON.

Ah, undone ! With no fair-seeming prelude thou be-
ginn'st thy tale.

MESSENGER.

Woe ! Again I cry it, for I bring a burden of dismay
Heaped upon calamities already wrought !

KREON.

What wouldst thou say ?

MESSENGER.

Kreon, those thy sister's sons behold no more the light
of day.

¹ Reading γόους (Porson, adopted by Nauck). From the fact that this messenger resumes (l. 1359), with no prefatory explanation of the situation, the narrative exactly at the point where it was broken off at line 1258, I have assumed that the poet meant him to be identical with the former one.

KREON.

Alas!

[1340

Terrible ills for me and for Thebes dost thou tell—

CHORUS.

O halls of Oedipus, have ye heard this?

KREON.

Of sons that by the selfsame fate have died!

CHORUS.

Their very stones might weep, could they but know.

KREON.

Woe's me, the disaster, when fate's stroke heavily fell!

Woe for my sorrows! Ah, unhappy I!

1345

MESSENGER.

Ah, didst thou know the evils more than these!

KREON.

What can be more calamitous than these?

MESSENGER.

Dead is thy sister—dead with her two sons.

CHORUS.

Upraise, upraise the lamentation-strain,

1350

Down on the head let blows of white hands rain!

KREON.

Hapless Jocasta, what an end of life

And marriage hast thou proved the Sphinx's riddle!

How came to pass the death of her two sons,
The strife, of Oedipus' curse that came?—declare. 1355

MESSENGER.

The land's fair fortune in her towers' defence
Thou know'st : the girdling walls be not so far
But that thou mayest know whate'er is done.
Now when in brazen mail they had clad their limbs,
Those princes, sons of ancient Oedipus, 1360
Into the mid-space went they forth and stood,
Those chieftains two, those battle-leaders twain,
As for the grapple and strife of single fight.
Then, gazing Argos-ward, Polyneikes prayed :
“ Queen Hera,—for thine am I since I wed 1365
Adrastus' child, and dwell within thy land,—
Grant me to slay my brother, and to stain
My warring hand with blood of victory ! ”—
Asking¹ a crown of shame, to slay a brother.
Tears sprang from many an eye at that dread fate, 1370
And each on other did men look askance.
But unto golden-shielded Pallas' fane
Eteokles looked, and prayed : “ Daughter of Zeus,
Grant that the conquering spear, of mine hand sped,
Yea, from this arm, may smite my brother's breast, 1375
And slay him who hath come to waste my land ! ”
Then, when the Tuscan trump, like signal-torch,
Rang forth the token of the bloody fray,
Forth darted each at other in terrible rush ;
And, like wild boars that whet the tameless tusk, 1380
Clashed they, foam-flakes beslavering their beards.
With spears they lunged : yet crouched behind their
shields,

¹ Reading *αἰτῶν*, with Nauck.

That so the steel might bootless glance aside.
And, if one saw foe's eye peer o'er the targe,
Aye thrust he, fain to overreach his fence. 1385
Yet cunningly through eyelets of their shields
They glanced, that nought awhile the spear achieved,
While more from all beholders trickled sweat,
Of fear for friends, than from the champions' selves.
But Eteokles, spurning aside a stone 1390
That rolled beneath his tread, without his shield
Showed glimpse of fenceless limb. Polyneikes lunged,
Marking the stroke so offered to the steel ;
And through the shank clear passed the Argive lance.
Loud cheered the whole array of Danaus' sons. 1395
But his foe's shoulder by that effort bared
The stricken marked, and Polyneikes' breast
Pierced with a strong spear-thrust, and gave back joy
To Kadmus' folk ; yet brake his spear-head short.
So, his lance lost, back fell he step by step, 1400
Caught up a rugged rock, and sped its flight,
Snapping his foe's spear thwart. Now was the fray
Equal, since either's hand was spear-bereft.
Thereupon snatched they at their falchion-hilts, .
Closed, clashing shields, and, traversing to and fro,
Made rage the stormy clangour of the fight. [1405
But, having learnt it visiting their land,
Eteokles used that feint Thessalian :
For, from the instant grapple springing clear,
Back on his left foot, backward still, he sinks, 1410
Watching the while the belly of his foe.
Then, with a right-foot rush, through the navel plunged
His sword, and 'twixt the spine-bones wedged the point.
Then, ribs and belly inarched in anguish-throe,
Down-raining blood-gouts, Polyneikes falls. 1415

Our king, as victor, winner of the fight,
Casting his sword down, fell to spoiling him,
Heeding but that, nor recking his own risk ;
Which thing undid him. Faintly breathing yet,
Still grasping in his grievous fall his sword, 1420
First-fallen Polyneikes with hard strain
Plunged into Eteokles' heart the blade.
Gnashing in dust their teeth, there side by side
They lie, those twain, the victory doubtful still.

CHORUS.

Alas ! I wail thy sore griefs, Oedipus ! 1425
Thy malisons, I wot, hath God fulfilled.

MESSENGER.

Ah, but hear now what woes remain to tell.
Even as her fallen sons were leaving life,
Their wretched mother rusheth on the scene,—
She and the maid, with haste of eager feet ; 1430
And, seeing them stricken with their mortal wounds,
She wailed, “ Ah sons, too late for help I come ! ”
Then, falling on her sons, on each in turn,
She wept, she wailed, her long vain nursing-toil
Bemoaning : and their sister at her side— 1435
“ Props of your mother's age, dear brethren, who
Leave me a bride unwed ! ” One dying gasp
Hard-heaving from his breast, King Eteokles
His mother heard, touched her with clammy hand,
Uttered no word, but from his eyes he spake 1440
With tears, as giving token of his love.
But Polyneikes breathing yet, and gazing
On sister and on aged mother, spake :
“ Mother, our death is this. I pity thee,

And thee, my sister, and my brother dead. 1445
Loved, he became my foe : but loved—yet loved !
Bury me, mother, and thou, sister mine,
In native soil, and our chafed city's wrath
Appease ye, that I win thus much at least
Of fatherland, though I have lost mine home. 1450
And close thou up mine eyelids with thine hand,
Mother ; ”—himself on his eyes layeth it—
“ And fare ye well : the darkness wraps me round.”
So both together breathed their sad life forth.
And when the mother saw this woeful chance, 1455
Grief-frenzied, from the dead she snatched a sword,
And wrought a horror : for through her mid-neck
She drives the steel, and with her best-beloved
Lies dead, embracing with her arms the twain.
Leapt to their feet the hosts with wrangling cries,—1460
We shouting that our lord was conqueror,
They, theirs. And strife there was between the chiefs,
These crying, “ First smote Polyneikes' spear ! ”
Those, “ Both be dead : with none the victory rests ! ”
Antigonè from the field had stol'n the while. 1465
Then rushed the foe to arms : but Kadmus' folk
By happy forethought under shield had halted.¹
So we forestalled the Argive host, and fell
Suddenly on them yet unfenced for fight.
Was none withstood us : huddled o'er the plain 1470
Fled they, and streamed the blood from slain untold

¹ It was the habit of Greek soldiers, on every occasion of a halt, even in presence of a foe, and on the eve of battle, to disburden themselves of their heavy shields and long spears, which they piled outside the ranks. The delay involved in resuming them was sometimes disastrous ; yet such action as that here ascribed to the Thebans remained quite exceptional.

By spears laid low. So, victors in the fight,
 Our triumph-trophy some 'gan rear to Zeus;
 And, some from Argive corpses stripping shields,
 Within our battlements the spoils we sent. 1475
 And others with Antigônê bear on
 The dead twain hither for their friends to mourn.
 So hath the strife had end for Thebes in part
 Most happily, in part most haplessly.

CHORUS.

Not a grief for the hearing alone 1480
 Is the bale of the house : ye may see
 Here, now, yon corpses three
 By the palace, in death as one,
 To the life that is darkness gone.

Enter procession bearing corpses, with Antigone.

ANTIGONE.

Never a veil o'er the tresses I threw
 O'er my soft cheek sweeping,
 Nor for maidenhood's shrinking I hid from view
 The hot blood leaping
 'Neath mine eyes, when I rushed in the bacchanal
 dance for the dead,
 When I cast on the earth the tiring that bound mine
 head, 1490
 Loose flinging my bright robe saffron of hue—
 I, by whom corpses with wailing are graveward led.
 Well wast thou named, *Polyneikes*!¹—Ah Thebes,
 woe's me!—

¹ *i.e.* The man of much strife (cf. l. 636).

No strife was thy strife : it was murder by murder
brought

To accomplishment, ruin to Oedipus' house, and fraught
With bloodshed of horror, with bloodshed of misery.

On what bard shall I call ?

What harper of dirges shall I bid come

To wail the lament,—O home, mine home !— 1500

While the tears, the tears fall,

As I bear three bodies of kindred slain,

Mother and sons, while the Fiend gloats over our woe

Who brought in ruin the house of Oedipus low,

In the day when the Songstress Sphinx's strain,

So hard to read, by his wisdom was read,

And the fierce shape down unto earth was sped ?

Woe for me, father mine !

Who hath borne griefs like unto thine ?

What Hellene, or alien, or who that sprang 1510

Of the ancient blood of a high-born line,

Whose race in a day is run, hath endured in the sight
of the sun

Such bitter pang ?

Woe's me for my dirge wild-ringing !

What song-bird that rocketh on high,

Mid the boughs of the oak-tree swinging,

Or the pine-tree, will echo my cry,

The moans of the motherless maiden,

Who wail for the life without friend 1520

I must know, who shall weep sorrow-laden

Tears without end ?

Over whom shall I make lamentation ?

Unto whom with rendings of hair

Shall I first give sorrow's oblation ?

Shall I cast them, mine offerings, there
Where the twin breasts are of my mother,
Where a suckling babe I have lain,
Or on ghastliest wounds of a brother
Cruelly slain ?

Come forth of thy chambers, blind father ; 1530
Ancient, thy sorrows lay bare,
Who didst cause mist-darkness to gather
On thine own eyes, thou who dost wear
Weariful days out. O hearken,
Whose old feet grope through the hall,
Who in gloom that no night-tide can darken
On thy pallet dost fall.

Enter Oedipus.

OEDIPUS.

Why hast thou drawn me, my child, to the light,
Whose sightless hand to thine hand's prop clings, 1540
Who was bowed on my bed amid chambers of night,—
Hast drawn by a wail through tears that rings,—
A white-haired shape, like a phantom that fades
On the sight, or a ghost from the underworld shades,
Or a dream that hath wings ?

ANTIGONE.

Woe is the word of my tidings to thee !
Father, thy sons behold no more
The light, nor thy wife, who aye upbore
Thy blind limbs tirelessly, tenderly,
O father, ah me !

1550

OEDIPUS.

Ah me for my woes ! Full well may I shriek, full well
may I moan !

By what doom have the spirits of these three flown
From the light of life ? O child, make known.

ANTIGONE.

Not as reproaching, nor mocking, I tell,
But in anguish. Thy curse, with its vengeance of
hell,

With swords laden, and fire,
And ruthless contention, on thy sons fell :
Woe's me, my sire !

OEDIPUS.

Alas for me !

ANTIGONE.

Wherefore thy deep-drawn sigh ? 1560

OEDIPUS.

For my children !

ANTIGONE.

Thine had been agony,
To the Sun-god's chariot couldst thou but raise
Thine eyes, couldst thou on these bodies gaze,
Dead where they lie.

OEDIPUS.

For the evil fate of my sons, it is all too plain ;
But ah, mine unhappiest wife !—by what doom, O my
child, was she slain ?

ANTIGONE.

Weeping and wailing, that all of her coming were ware,
 Hasted she. Unto her children she bare, O she bare
 Sacredest breasts of a mother with suppliant prayer.

And she found her sons at Electra's portal, 1570

In the mead with the clover fair,

Closing with spears in the combat mortal :

As lions that strive in their lair

They grappled, with falchions ruthless-gashing :

Yea, now the oblation of death fell plashing

Which Ares giveth when Hades the spoil will share.

And she snatched from the dead, and the bronze-
 hammered blade through her bosom she thrust ;

And in grief for her children, enclasping her children,
 she fell in the dust.

Lo, all the griefs of our line, one marshalled array,

Have been gathered, O father, against our house this
 day 1580

Of the God in whose hands their accomplishment
 lay.

CHORUS.

Many an ill to Oedipus' house begins

This day. May happier life be yet in store !

KREON.

Refrain laments : time is it we gave heed

To burial. Unto these words, Oedipus, 1585

Hearken : thy son Eteokles gave me rule

O'er this land, making it a marriage-dower

To Haimon with thy child Antigônê.

Therefore thou mayest dwell therein no more ;

For plainly spake Teiresias—never Thebes 1590

Shall prosper while thou dwellest in the land.
 Then get thee forth : this not despiteously
 I speak, nor as thy foe, but fearing hurt
 To Thebes by reason of thy vengeance-fiends.

OEDIPUS.

Fate, from the first to grief thou barest me, 1595
 And pain, beyond all men that ever were.
 Ere from my mother's womb I came to light,
 Phœbus to Laius spake me, yet unborn,
 My father's murderer—ah, woe is me !
 When I was born, my father, my begetter,— 1600
 Doomed by mine hand to die,—accounting me
 From birth¹ his foe, would slay me, sent me forth,
 A suckling yet, a wretched prey to beasts.
 Yet was I saved. Oh had Cithæron sunk
 Down to the bottomless chasms of Tartarus, 1605
 For that it slew me not !—but Fate gave me
 To be a bondman, Polybus my lord.
 So mine own father did I slay, and came,—
 Ah wretch !—unto mine hapless mother's couch.
 Sons I begat, my brethren, and destroyed, 1610
 Passing to them the curse received of Laius.
 For not so witless am I from the birth,
 As to devise these things against mine eyes
 And my sons' life, but by the finger of God.
 Let be :—what shall I do, the fortune-crost ? 1615
 Who shall companion me, my blind steps guide ?
 She who is dead ? O yea, were she alive !
 My sons, a goodly pair ? Nay, I have none.
 Am I yet young, to win me livelihood ?

¹ Reading *πεφυκέσαι*, *vice δυσδαίμονα*, "ill-starred."

Whence? Wherefore, Kreon, slay me utterly? 1620
For thou wilt slay, if forth the land thou cast.
Yet never twining round thy knee mine hands
A coward will I show me, to betray
My noble birth, how ill soe'er I fare.

KREON.

Well hast thou said thou wilt not clasp my knees. 1625
I cannot let thee dwell within the land.
Of these dead, this within the halls be borne
Straightway: that,—who with aliens came to smite
His father's city—Polyneikes' corpse,
Without the land's bounds cast unburied forth. 1630
To all Kadmeans shall this be proclaimed:—
Whoso on this corpse laying wreaths is found,
Or with earth hiding, death shall be his meed.
Unwept, unburied, leave him meat for birds.
But thou thy mourning for the corpses three, 1635
Antigonê, leave, and get thee within doors.
Thy maiden state until the morrow keep,
Whereon the couch of Haimon waiteth thee.

ANTIGONE.

Father, in what ills is our misery whelmed!
For thee I make moan more than for the dead. 1640
Thine ills are not part heavy and part light,
But in all things art thou in woeful case.
But thee I question, new-created king,
Why outrage thus my sire with banishment?
Wherefore make laws touching a hapless corse? 1645

KREON.

Eteokles' ordinance, not mine, is this.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis senseless—witless thou who giv'st it force.

KREON.

How, were't not just to carry out his hests?

ANTIGONE.

If they be wrong, in malice spoken—no!

KREON.

How, were't not just to cast yon man to dogs? 1650

ANTIGONE.

Nay: so ye wreak on him no lawful vengeance.

KREON.

Yea, if to Thebes a foe, no foe by birth.¹

ANTIGONE.

Hath he not² unto fate paid forfeit life?

KREON.

Forfeit of burial now too let him pay.

ANTIGONE.

Wherein sinned he, who came to claim his own? 1655

KREON.

This man shall have no burial, be thou sure.

¹ Nauck reads ἐχθαπτός, "Hate is his due, if he was foe to Thebes."

² οὐκουν (Nauck).

ANTIGONE.

I, though the state forbid, will bury him.

KREON.

Thyself then shalt thou bury with thy dead.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis glorious that two friends lie side by side.

KREON.

Seize ye this girl, and hale her within doors ! 1660

ANTIGONE.

Never ! for I will not unclasp this corpse.

KREON.

God hath decreed, girl, not as seems thee good.

ANTIGONE.

Yea—hath decreed this, *Outrage not the dead !*

KREON.

Know, none shall spread the damp dust over him.

ANTIGONE.

Nay !—for Jocasta's, for his mother's sake ! 1665

KREON.

Vain is thy labour : this thou shalt not win.

ANTIGONE.

Suffer at least that I may bathe the corpse.

KREON.

This shall be of the things the state forbids.

ANTIGONE.

Let me at least bind up his cruel wounds.

KREON.

Thou shalt in no wise honour this dead man. 1670

ANTIGONE.

Belovèd ! on thy lips this kiss at least—

KREON.

Ruin thy marriage not by thy laments.

ANTIGONE.

How ! living shall I e'er wed son of thine ?

KREON.

Needs must thou. Whither from the couch wilt flee ?

ANTIGONE.

Me shall that night a Danaus' Daughter prove.¹ 1675

KREON (*to Oedipus*).

Dost mark how rails she in her recklessness ?

ANTIGONE (*raising Polyneikes' sword*).

Witness the steel—this sword whereby I swear.

KREON.

Wherefore so eager to avoid this bridal ?

¹ Alluding to the murder of the sons of Aegyptus by Danaus' daughters, whom they wedded perforce.

ANTIGONE.

I will share exile with mine hapless sire.

KREON.

Noble thy spirit, yet lurks folly there. 1680

ANTIGONE.

Yea, and with him will die. Know this withal.

KREON.

Thou shalt not slay my son. Hence, leave the land !
[*Exit Kreon.*]

OEDIPUS.

Daughter, for thy devotion thank I thee.

ANTIGONE.

I marry, father,—thou in exile lone !

OEDIPUS.

Ah stay : be happy. I will bear mine ills. 1685

ANTIGONE.

Who then will minister to thy blindness, father ?

OEDIPUS.

Where my weird is, there shall I fall, there lie.

ANTIGONE.

Ah, where is Oedipus ?—where that riddle famed ?

OEDIPUS.

Lost. One day blessed me, one hath ruined me.

ANTIGONE.

Is it not then my due to share thine ills? 1690

OEDIPUS.

'Twere a maid's shame,—exile with her blind sire!

ANTIGONE.

Nay, but—so she be wise—her glory, father.

OEDIPUS.

That I may touch thy mother, guide me now.

ANTIGONE.

Lo, touch her with thine hand—so old, so dear!

OEDIPUS.

Ah mother! Ah, most hapless helpmeet mine! 1695

ANTIGONE.

Piteous she lies, with all ills crowned at once.

OEDIPUS.

Eteokles' corse, and Polyneikes'—where?

ANTIGONE.

Here lie they, each by other's side outstretched.

OEDIPUS.

Lay my blind hand upon their ill-starred brows.

ANTIGONE.

Lo there: touch with thine hand thy children slain. 1700

OEDIPUS.

Dear hapless dead sons of a hapless sire !

ANTIGONE.

Ah Polyneikes, name most dear to me !

OEDIPUS.

Now, child, doth Loxias' oracle come to pass,—

ANTIGONE.

What ? Wilt thou tell new ills beside the old ?

OEDIPUS.

That I, a wanderer, should in Athens die. 1705

ANTIGONE.

Where ? What Athenian burg shall harbour thee ?

OEDIPUS.

Hallowed Colonus, Chariot-father's¹ home.
On then : to this thy blind sire minister,
Since thou art fixed to share my banishment.

ANTIGONE.

To woeful exile pass away. 1710
Stretch forth, O father hoary-grey,
Thy dear hand : grasp me. Thee I lead,
As breeze wafts on the galley's speed.

¹ Poseidon, the Sea-god, who created the first war-horse.

OEDIPUS.

Lo, daughter, I pass on :
Thou guide me, hapless one.

ANTIGONE.

Hapless I am—thou sayest well—
Above all maids in Thebes that dwell.

OEDIPUS.

Where shall I plant mine old feet now ?
Reach me my staff, O daughter thou.

ANTIGONE.

Hitherward, hitherward, tread : 1720
Let thy feet follow hither mine hand,
O strengthless as dream of the night !

OEDIPUS.

Ah thou who on wretchedest exile hast sped
The old man forth of his fatherland !
Ah woes I have borne ! Ah horror's height !

ANTIGONE.

Thou hast borne ?—thou hast borne ?—doth Justice
regard not then
The sinner ? Requiteth she not the follies of men ?

OEDIPUS.

Lo, I am he on breath
Of song upraised to heaven,
When that dark riddle of the Maid of Death
To me to read was given. [1730

ANTIGONE.

Why raise the ghost of shame, the Sphinx's story ?
Forbear to vaunt too late that faded glory.
For thee this anguish lay the while in wait,
Far from thy land to know the exile's fate,
 And, father, in some place unknown to die.
To maids who love me leaving tears of yearning,
From fatherland an exile unreturning,
 I wander far in plight unmaidenly.

OEDIPUS.

Woe for the heart where duty's fire is burning ! 1740

ANTIGONE.

Twined with my father's sad renown
This shall be mine unfading crown.
Woe for thy wrongs ! Brother, alas for thine,
 Who from thine home a tombless corse art thrust,
Hapless ! Though death, my sire, for this be mine,
 Yet will I veil him secretly with dust.

OEDIPUS.

Show thee again to thy companions' eyes.

ANTIGONE.

Why should they weep ? Mine own laments suffice.

OEDIPUS.

Then at the altars bow with suppliant cry.

ANTIGONE.

They weary of my tale of misery.

1750

OEDIPUS.

Seek at the least the haunt of Revel's God
Mid Mænad hills by foot profane untrod.

ANTIGONE.

How!—render homage¹ without heart
To Him, for whom erstwhile arrayed
In Theban fawnskins, I had part
In Semelê's holy dance that swayed
By hill, by glade?

OEDIPUS.

People of a glorious nation, mark me—Oedipus am I,
He who read the riddle world-renowned, the man once
set on high,
He whose single prowess quelled the Sphinx's blood-
polluted might. 1760
Now dishonoured am I banished from the land in piteous
plight.
Yet what boots it thus to wail? What profits vainly
to lament?
Whoso is but mortal needs must bear the fate of heaven
sent.

[*Exeunt Oedipus and Antigone.*]

CHORUS.

Hail, reverèd Victory!
Rest upon my life; and me
Crown, and crown eternally!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

¹ Of the worship of Dionysus jubilant dance and song were essential features: since she could henceforth but simulate the Bacchic rapture, she feels that her presence would be a profanation.

ORESTES.

ARGUMENT.

WHEN *Orestes* had avenged his father by slaying his mother *Klytemnestra* and *Aegisthus* her paramour, as is told in the Tragedy called "*Electra*," he was straightway haunted by the *Erinnyes*, the avengers of parricide, and by them made mad ; and in the torment thereof he continued six days, till he was brought to death's door.

And herein is told how his sister *Electra* ministered to him, and how by the *Argive* people they were condemned to death, while their own kin stood far from their help, and how they strove against their doom.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELECTRA, *daughter of Agamemnon.*

HELEN, *wife of Menelaus.*

ORESTES, *son of Agamemnon.*

MENELAUS, *brother of Agamemnon.*

PYLADES, *friend of Orestes.*

TYNDAREUS, *father of Klytemnestra.*

HERMIONE, *daughter of Helen.*

MESSENGER, *an old servant of Agamemnon.*

PHRYGIAN, *a slave, attendant on Helen.*

APOLLO.

CHORUS, *consisting of Argive women.*

Attendants of Helen, Menelaus, and Tyndareus.

SCENE :—At the Palace in Argos.

ORESTES.

Orestes asleep on his bed, Electra watching beside it.

ELECTRA.

NOTHING there is so terrible to tell,¹
Nor fleshly pang, nor visitation of God,
But poor humanity may have to bear it.
For the once blest,—I taunt his misery not,—
Begotten of Zeus, as men say, Tantalus, 5
Dreading the crag which topples o'er his head,
Now hangs mid air ; and pays this penalty,
As the tale telleth, for that he, a man,
Honoured to sit god-like at meat with Gods,
In shameful madness kept unreined his tongue. 10
He begat Pelops ; born to him was Atreus
For whom with her doom-threads Fate twined a strand
Of strife against Thyestes, yea, his brother ;—
Why must I tell o'er things unspeakable ?
Atreus for their sire's feasting slew his sons. 15
Of Atreus—what befell between I tell not—
Famed Agamemnon sprang,—if *this* be fame,—
And Menelaus, of Cretan Aeropê.
And Menelaus wedded Helen, loathed
Of heaven, the while King Agamemnon won 20

¹ Or, " Nothing there is so awful—dare I say ?—"

Klytemnestra's couch, to Hellenes memorable.
To him were daughters three, Chrysothemis,
Iphigeneia, Electra, and a son
Orestes, of one impious mother born,
Who trapped in tangling toils her lord, and slew : 25
Wherefore she slew,—a shame for maid to speak!—
I leave untold, for whoso will to guess.
What boots it to lay wrong to Phœbus' charge,
Who thrust Orestes on to slay the mother
That bare him?—few but cry shame on the deed, 30
Though in obedience to the God he slew.
I in the deed shared,—far as woman might,—
And Pylades, who helped to compass it.
Thereafter, wasted with fierce malady,
Hapless Orestes, fallen on his couch, 35
Lieth : his mother's blood aye scourgeth him
With madness. Scarce for awe I name their names
Whose terrors rack him, the Eumenides.
And to this day, the sixth since cleansing fire
Enwrapped the murdered form, his mother's corse, 40
Morsel of food his lips have not received,
Nor hath he bathed his flesh ; but in his cloak
Now palled, when he from torment respite hath,
With brain unclouded weeps, now from his couch
Frenzied with wild feet bounds like steed unyoked. 45
And Argos hath decreed that none with roof
Or fire receive us, none speak word to us,
The matricides. The appointed day is this,
Whereon the Argive state shall cast the vote,
Whether we twain must die, by stoning die, 50
Or through our own necks plunge the whetted steel.
Yet one hope have we of escape from death ;
For Menelaus from Troy hath reached the land.

Thronging the Nauplian haven with his fleet
 Off-shore he anchors, who hath wandered long 55
 Homeless from Troy. But Helen—"sorrow-laden"
 She names herself! ¹—safe screened by night he sent
 Before, unto our house, lest some, whose sons
 At Ilium fell, if she by daylight came,
 Should see, and stone her. Now within she weeps 60
 Her sister and her house's misery.
 And yet hath she some solace in her griefs:
 The child whom, sailing unto Troy, she left,
 Hermionê, whom Menelaus brought
 From Sparta to my mother's fostering, 65
 In her she joys, and can forget her woes.
 I gaze far down the highway, strain to see
 Menelaus come. Frail anchor of hope is ours
 To ride on, if we be not saved of him.
 In desperate plight is an ill-fated house. 70

Enter Helen.

HELEN.

Klytemnestra's daughter, Agamemnon's child,
 Electra, maid a weary while unwed,
 Hapless, how fare ye, thou and the stricken one
 Thy brother Orestes, who his mother slew?
 I come, as unpolluted by thy speech,² 75
 Since upon Phœbus all thy sin I lay.
 Yet do I moan for Klytemnestra's fate,
 My sister, whom, since unto Ilium

¹ So Paley: Wedd interprets, "Yea, that cause Of countless woes,—"

² To speak to an unpurified murderer entailed pollution. See *Electra*, 1266-7 and 1296-7.

I sailed,—as heaven-frenzied I did sail,—
I have seen not : now left lorn I wail our lot. 80

ELECTRA.

Helen, why tell thee what thyself mayst see—
The piteous plight of Agamemnon's son ?
Sleepless I sit beside a wretched corpse ;
For, but for faintest breath, a corpse he is.
His evils—I reproach him not with them.¹ 85
But prosperous thou art come, and prosperous comes
Thy lord, to us the misery-stricken ones.

HELEN.

How long hath he so lain upon his couch ?

ELECTRA.

Even since he spilt the blood of her that bare him.

HELEN.

Ah wretch !—ah mother, what a death she died ! 90

ELECTRA.

Such is his plight that he is crushed of ills.

HELEN.

In heaven's name, maiden, do to me a grace.

ELECTRA.

So far as this my tendance suffereth me.

HELEN.

Wilt go for me unto my sister's tomb ?

¹ Or, "None do I reproach with them." (Wedd).

ELECTRA.

My mother's?—canst thou ask me?—for what cause? 95

HELEN.

Shorn locks bear from me and drink-offerings.

ELECTRA.

What sin, if *thou* draw nigh a dear one's tomb?

HELEN.

I shame to show me to the Argive folk.

ELECTRA.

Late virtue in who basely fled her home!

HELEN.

Thou speakest truly—speakest cruelly. 100

ELECTRA.

What shame before Mycenians trammels thee?

HELEN.

I fear the sires of those at Ilium dead.

ELECTRA.

Well mayst thou fear: all Argos cries on thee.

HELEN.

Grant me this grace and break my chain of fear.

ELECTRA.

I cannot look upon my mother's tomb. 105

HELEN.

Yet shame it were should handmaids bear these gifts.

ELECTRA.

Wherefore send not thy child Hermionê?

HELEN.

To pass mid throngs beseemeth maidens not.

ELECTRA.

She should pay nurture's debt unto the dead.

HELEN.

Sooth hast thou said : I hearken to thee, maid. 110

Yea, I will send my daughter ; thou say'st well.

Child, come, Hermionê, without the doors :

Enter Hermionê.

Take these drink-offerings, this mine hair, in hand,

And go thou, and round Klytemnestra's tomb

Shed mingled honey, milk, and foam of wine ; 115

And, standing on the grave-mound's height, say this :

" Thy sister Helen these drink-offerings gives,

Fearing to approach thy tomb, and dreading sore

The Argive rabble." Bid her bear a mood

Kindly to me, to thee, and to my lord, 120

And to these hapless twain, whom God hath stricken.

All gifts unto the dead which duty bids

I render to my sister, promise thou.

Go, daughter, haste : and, soon as thou hast paid

The tomb its offerings, with all speed return. 125

[Exeunt Helen and Hermionê.]

ELECTRA.

Ah Nature, what a curse art thou to men—
 What blessing to thy virtuous heritors !
 Mark, of her hair she shore the tips alone,
 Sparing its beauty—still the Helen of old !
 God's hate be on thee, who hast ruined me, 130
 My brother, and all Hellas ! Woe is me !
 Lo, hither come my friends who wail with me
 My dirges ! Soon shall they uprouse from sleep
 Him who hath peace now, and shall drown mine eyes
 In tears, when I behold my brother rave. 135

Enter Chorus.

Ah friends, dear friends, with soundless footfall tread ;
 Make ye no murmur, neither be there jar.
 Kindly is this your friendship, yet to me,
 If ye but rouse him, misery shall befall.

CHORUS.

Hush ye, O hush ye ! light be the tread (Str. 1)
 Of the sandal ; nor murmur nor jar let there be. 140

ELECTRA.

Afar step ye thitherward, far from his bed !

CHORUS.

Lo, I hearken to thee.

ELECTRA.

Ha, be thy voice as the light breath blown
 Through the pipe of the reed, O friend, I pray !

CHORUS.

Lo, softly in murmured undertone
I am sighing.

ELECTRA.

Yea—

Lower—yet lower !—ah softly, ah softly draw nigh !
Make answer, ah why have ye hitherward wended, ah
why ?— 150
So long is it since he hath stilled him in sleep to lie.

CHORUS.

(*Ant. 1*)

How is it with him ?—dear friend, speak.
What tidings for me ?—what hath come to pass ?

ELECTRA.

Yet doth he breathe, but his moans wax weak.

CHORUS.

How say'st thou ?—alas !

ELECTRA.

Thou shalt slay him, if once from his eyes thou have
driven
The sweetness of slumber that o'er them flows.

CHORUS.

Alas for the deeds of the malice of heaven !

ELECTRA.

Alas for his throes ! 160
Wrongful was he who uttered that wrongful rede

When Loxias, throned on the tripod of Themis, decreed
The death of my mother, a foul unnatural deed !

CHORUS.

(*Str. 2*)

See'st thou ?—he stirreth beneath his cloak !

ELECTRA.

Woe unto thee ! it was thy voice broke
The bands of his sleep by thy wild outcry—

CHORUS.

Nay, but I deemed that he yet slept on.

ELECTRA.

Wilt thou not hence, from the house to be gone ? 170
Ah, turn thee again, and backward hie
With the sound of thy voice, with the jar of thy
tread !

CHORUS.

Yet doth he slumber on.

ELECTRA.

Sooth said.

(*Sings low.*)¹

Queen, Majesty of Night,
To travail-burdened mortals giver of sleep,
Float up from Erebus ! With wide wings' sweep
Come, come, on Agamemnon's mansion light !
Fordone with anguish, whelmed in woeful plight,
We are sinking—sinking deep. [180

¹ Some editors assign to the chorus the six lines which follow.

(*Chorus raise refrain.*)

With jarring strain have ye broken in !
 Ah hush ! ah hush ! refrain ye the din
 Of chanting lips, and vouchsafe the grace¹
 Of the peace of sleep to his resting-place.

CHORUS.

(*Ant. 2*)

Tell, what end waiteth his misery ?

ELECTRA.

Even to die,—what else should be ?
 For he knoweth not even craving for food.

CHORUS.

Ah, then is his doom plain—all too plain ! 190

ELECTRA.

Phœbus for victims hath sealed us twain,
 Who decreed that we spill a mother's blood
 For a father's—a deed without a name !

CHORUS.

'Twas a deed of justice—

ELECTRA.

A deed of shame !
 Thou slewest,² and art dead,
 Mother that bare me—thrustedst to the tomb
 Our father and these children of thy womb.

¹ Reading *χάριν*.

² Reading *ἔκaves*.

For corpse-like are we gone, our life is fled. 200
 Thou art in Hades : of my days hath sped
 The half amidst a doom
 Of lamentation and weary sighs,
 And of tears through the long nights poured from
 mine eyes.
 Spouseless,—behold me !—and childless aye,
 Am I wasting a desolate life away.

CHORUS.

Look, maid Electra, who art at his side,
 Lest this thy brother unawares have died.
 So utter-nerveless, stirless, likes me not. 210

ORESTES (*waking*).

Dear spell of sleep, assuager of disease,
 How sweet thou cam'st to me in sorest need !
 O sovereign pain-oblivion, ah, how wise
 A Goddess !—by the woe-worn how invoked !
 Whence came I hitherward ?—how found this place ?
 For I forget : past thoughts are blotted out. [215

ELECTRA.

Belovèd, how thy sleeping made me glad !
 Wouldst have me clasp thee, and uplift thy frame ?

ORESTES.

Take, O yea, take me : from mine anguished lips
 Wipe thou the clotted foam, and from mine eyes. 220

ELECTRA.

Lo !—sweet the service is : nor I think scorn
 With sister's hand to tend a brother's limbs.

ORESTES.

Put 'neath my side thy side : the matted hair
Brush from my brow, for dimly see mine eyes.

ELECTRA.

Ah hapless head of tresses all befouled, 225
How wildly tossed art thou, unwashen long !

ORESTES.

Lay me again down. When the frenzy-throes
Leave me, unstrung am I—strengthless of limb.

ELECTRA (*lays him down*).

Lo there. To sick ones welcome is the couch,
A place pain-haunted, and yet necessary. 230

ORESTES.

Raise me once more upright : turn me about.
Hard are the sick to please, for helplessness.

ELECTRA.

Wilt set thy feet upon the earth, and take
One step at last ? Change is in all things sweet.

ORESTES.

Yea, surely : this the semblance hath of health. 235
Better than nought is seeming, though unreal.

ELECTRA.

Give ear unto me now, O brother mine,
While yet the Fiends unclouded leave thy brain.

ORESTES.

News hast thou ? Welcome this, so it be fair :
If to mine hurt, sorrow have I enow. 240

ELECTRA.

Menelaus, thy sire's brother, home hath come :
In Nauplia his galleys anchored lie.

ORESTES.

How say'st ? As light risen on thy woes and mine
He comes, our kinsman, and our father's debtor !

ELECTRA.

He comes—receive for surety of my words 245
This—bringing Helen from the walls of Troy.

ORESTES.

More blest he were had he escaped alone :
Sore bane he bringeth, if he bring his wife.

ELECTRA.

As beacons of reproach and infamy [250
Through Hellas, were the daughters Tyndareus gat.

ORESTES (*with sudden fury*).

Be thou not like the vile ones !—this thou mayst—
Not in word only, but in inmost thought !

ELECTRA.

Woe's me, my brother ! Wildly rolls thine eye :
Swift changest thou to madness, sane but now !

ORESTES.

Mother!—'beseech thee, hark not thou on me 255
Yon maidens gory-eyed and snaky-haired!
Lo there!—lo there!—they are nigh—they leap on me!

ELECTRA.

Stay, hapless one, unshuddering on thy couch:
Nought of thy vivid vision seest thou.

ORESTES.

Ah, Phœbus!—they shall slay me—hound-faced fiends,
Goddesses dread, hell's gorgon-priestesses! [260

ELECTRA.

I will not let thee go! My clasping arms
Shall hold thee from thy leap of misery.

ORESTES.

Unhand me!—of mine Haunting Fiends thou art—
Dost grip my waist to hurl me into hell! 265

ELECTRA.

Ah hapless I! What succour can I win
Now we have gotten godhead to our foe?

ORESTES.

Give me mine horn-tipped bow, even Loxias' gift,
Wherewith Apollo bade drive back the fiends,
If with their frenzy of madness they should fright me.
A Goddess shall be smitten of mortal hand, [270
Except she vanish from before mine eyes.

Do ye not hear?—not see the feathered shafts
 At point to leap from my far-smiting bow?
 Ha! ha!—
 Why tarry ye? Soar to the welkin's height 275
 On wings! There rail on Phœbus' oracles!
 Ah!
 Why do I rave, hard-panting from my lungs?
 Whither have I leapt, whither, from my couch?
 For after storm once more a calm I see.
 Sister, why weep'st thou, muffling o'er thine head? 280
 Ashamed am I to make thee share my woes,
 To afflict a maiden with my malady.
 For mine affliction's sake break not, dear heart.
 Thou didst consent thereto, yet spilt of me
 My mother's blood was. Loxias I blame, 285
 Who thrust me on to most accursed deed,
 And cheered me still with words, but not with deeds.
 I trow, my father, had I face to face
 Questioned him if I must my mother slay,
 Had earnestly besought me by this beard 290
 Never to thrust sword through my mother's heart,
 Since he should not win so to light again,
 And I, woe's me! should drain this cup of ills!
 Even now unveil thee, sister well-beloved;
 From tears refrain, how miserable soe'er 295
 We be; and, when thou seest me despair,
 Mine horror and the fainting of mine heart
 Assuage and comfort; and, when thou shalt moan,
 Must I be nigh thee, chiding lovingly;
 For friendship's glory is such helpfulness. 300
 Now, sorrow-stricken, pass within the house:
 Lay thee down, give thy sleepless eyelids sleep:
 Put to thy lips food, and thy body bathe.

For if thou fail me, or of tireless watch
 Fall sick, I am lost, in thee alone have I 305
 Mine help, of others, as thou seest, forlorn.

ELECTRA.

Never ! With thee will I make choice of death
 Or life : it is all one ; for, if thou die,
 What shall a woman do ? how 'scape alone,
 Without friend, father, brother ? Yet, if thou 310
 Wilt have it so, I must. But lay thee down,
 And heed not terrors overmuch, that scare
 Thee from thy couch, but on thy bed abide.
 For though thou be not, save in fancy, sick,
 This is affliction, this despair, to men. [Exit.

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Terrible Ones of the on-rushing feet,
 Of the pinions far-sailing,
 Through whose dance-revel, held where no Baccha-
 nals meet,
 Ringeth weeping and wailing,
 Swart-hued Eumenides, wide 'neath the dome 320
 Of the firmament soaring,
 Avenging, avenging blood-guilt,—lo, I come,
 Imploring, imploring !—
 To the son of Atreides vouchsafe to forget
 His frenzy of raving.
 Ah for the task to the woe-stricken set !
 Ah ruinous craving
 To accomplish the hest of the Tripod, the word
 That of Phœbus was uttered
 At the navel of earth as thou stoodest, when stirred
 The dim crypt as it muttered ! [330

(*Ant.*)

O Zeus, is there mercy ? What struggle of doom
 Cometh fraught with death-danger,
 Thrusting thee onward, the wretched, on whom
 The Erinnys-avenger
 Heapeth tears upon tears, and the blood hath she
 brought

Of thy mother upon thee
 And thine house, that it driveth thee frenzy-dis-
 traught !

I bemoan thee, bemoan thee !
 Not among men doth fair fortune abide, 340
 But, as sail tempest-riven,
 Is it whelmed in affliction's death-ravening tide
 By the malice of heaven,—
 Nay, abides not, for where shall I find me a line
 Of more honour in story
 Than Tantalus' house, from espousals divine
 That traceth its glory ?

But lo, hither cometh a prince, meseems—
 Menelaus the king ! for his vesture, that gleams
 In splendour exceeding, 350
 The blood of the Tantalid House reveals.
 Hail, thou who didst sail with a thousand keels
 Unto Asia speeding !
 Hail to thee, dweller with fortune fair,
 Who hast gained of the Gods' grace all thy prayer !

Enter Menelaus, with attendants.

MENELAUS.

All hail, mine home. I see thee half with joy,
 From Troy returned, and half with grief behold :
 For never saw I other house ere this

So compassed round with toils of woeful ills.
 For touching Agamemnon's fate I knew, 360
 And by what death at his wife's hands he died,
 When my prow touched at Malea : from the waves
 The shipman's seer, the unerring God, the son
 Of Nereus, Glaucus, made it known to me.
 For full in view he rose, and cried to me : 365
 " Thy brother, Menelaus, lieth dead,
 Fall'n in the bath, the death-snare¹ of his wife ! "—
 So filled me and my mariners with tears
 Full many. As I touched the Nauplian land,
 Even as my wife was hasting hitherward, 370
 And looked to clasp dead Agamemnon's son
 Orestes, and his mother, in loving arms,
 As prospering yet, I heard a fisher tell
 Of Tyndareus' daughter's murder heaven-accurst.
 Now tell to me, ye damsels, where is he, 375
 Agamemnon's son, who dared that awful deed ?
 A babe was he in Klytemnestra's arms,
 When Troyward bound I went from mine halls forth :
 Wherefore I should not know him, if I saw.

ORESTES.

I am Orestes ! This is he thou seekest. 380
 Free-willed shall I declare to thee my woes :
 Yet suppliant first for prelude clasp thy knees
 Linking to thee the leafless prayers of lips.²
 Save me : thou comest in my sorest need.

¹ Reading ἀρκυστάτοις (Nauck), for πανυστάτοις, " Fallen in that last bath, by a wife prepared."

² Suppliants who approached a God brought leafy boughs, which they laid on his altar, linking themselves thereto by woollen fillets. This is an oral petition, without that outward symbol.

MENELAUS.

Gods!—what see I? What ghost do I behold? 385

ORESTES.

A ghost indeed—through woes a death-in-life!

MENELAUS.

How wild thy matted locks are, hapless one!

ORESTES.

My deeds, not mine appearance, torture me.¹

MENELAUS.

Fearfully glarest thou with stony eyes!

ORESTES.

My life is gone: my name alone is left. 390

MENELAUS.

Ah visage marred past all imagining!

ORESTES.

A hapless mother's murderer am I.

MENELAUS.

I heard:—its horrors spare: thy words be few.

ORESTES.

I spare. No horrors heaven spares to me!

¹ Wedd renders, "Stern fact, not outward seeming, tortures me."

MENELAUS.

What aileth thee ? What sickness ruineth thee ? 395

ORESTES.

Conscience !—to know I have wrought a fearful deed.

MENELAUS.

How mean'st thou ? Clear is wisdom, not obscure.

ORESTES.

Grief most of all is that which wasteth me,—

MENELAUS.

Dread Goddess she : yet is there cure for her.

ORESTES.

And Madness, vengeance for a mother's blood. 400

MENELAUS.

And when began thy madness ? What the day ?

ORESTES.

Whereon I heaped my wretched mother's grave.

MENELAUS.

At home, or as thou watchedst by the pyre ?

ORESTES.

In that night-watch for gathering of the bones.

MENELAUS.

Was any by, to raise thy body up ? 405

ORESTES.

Pylades, sharer in my mother's blood.

MENELAUS.

And by what phantom-shapes thus art thou plagued ?

ORESTES.

Methought I saw three maidens like to night.

MENELAUS.

I know of whom thou speak'st, but will not name.

ORESTES.

They are Dread Ones : wise art thou to name them
not.

410

MENELAUS.

Do these by blood of kindred madden thee ?

ORESTES.

Woe for their haunting feet that dog me aye !

MENELAUS.

For dread deeds sufferings dread—not strange is this.

ORESTES.

Yet can I cast my burden of affliction—

MENELAUS.

Nay, speak not thou of death !—not wise were this. 415

ORESTES.

On Phœbus, who bade spill my mother's blood.

MENELAUS.

Sore lack was his of justice and of right!

ORESTES.

The Gods' thralls are we—whatsoe'er gods be.

MENELAUS.

And doth not Loxias shield thee in thine ills?

ORESTES.

He long delays—such is the Gods' wont still. 420

MENELAUS.

How long since passed thy mother's breath away?

ORESTES.

The sixth day this: the death-pyre yet is warm.

MENELAUS.

How soon those Powers required thy mother's blood!

ORESTES.

Not wise, but loyal friend to friends was I.¹

MENELAUS.

Thy sire's avenging—doth it aught avail thee? 425

ORESTES.

Naught yet:—delay I count as deedlessness.

¹ Or, "Not subtle am I, but loyal friend to friends;" referring to his being caught tripping in argument, since 423 implies that 420 is untrue. Orestes intimates that, as he is weak where Menelaus seems to be strong, the latter is weak where he is strong (Wedd).

MENELAUS.

And Argos—how on thy deed looketh she?

ORESTES.

I am hated so, that none will speak to me.

MENELAUS.

Cleansed are thine hands, as bids the law, from blood?

ORESTES.

Barred from all homes am I whereto I seek.¹ 430

MENELAUS.

Who of the citizens would banish thee?

ORESTES.

Oiax²—for Troy-born hate against my sire.

MENELAUS.

Ay so—to avenge Palamedes' blood on thee.

ORESTES.

Not mine the deed. I am trebly overmatched.

MENELAUS.

What other?—be they of Aegisthus' friends? 435

¹ Hence he had not yet been purified, as this must be done in the unpolluted house of another, by the blood of victims and running water.

² Brother of Palamedes. See *Helen*, l. 767.

ORESTES.

Yea, these insult me : Argos hears them now.

MENELAUS.

Doth Argos let thee keep thy father's sceptre ?

ORESTES.

How should they, who no more would let me live ?

MENELAUS.

What do they which thou canst for certain tell ?

ORESTES.

This day shall they pass sentence on my fate. 440

MENELAUS.

For exile, death, or other doom than death ?

ORESTES.

To die by stoning at the people's hands.

MENELAUS.

Why flee not o'er the confines of the land ?

ORESTES.

I am in the toils, ringed round by brazen arms.

MENELAUS.

Of private foes, or of all Argos' power ? 445

ORESTES.

Of all the folk, that I may die ;—soon said.

MENELAUS.

Hapless! Misfortune's deepest depth thou hast reached!

ORESTES.

In thee mine hope hath refuge yet from ills.
 Thou com'st to folk in misery, prosperous thou :
 Give thy friends share of thy prosperity, 450
 And not for self keep back thine happiness,
 But bear a part in suffering in thy turn :
 Requite, to whom thou ow'st, my father's boon.
 The name of friendship have they, not the truth,
 The friends that in misfortune are not friends. 455

CHORUS.

Lo, hither straineth on with agèd feet
 The Spartan Tyndareus, in vesture black,
 His hair, in mourning for his daughter, shorn.

ORESTES.

Undone, Menelaus!—hither Tyndareus
 Draws nigh me, whose eye most of all I shun 460
 To meet, by reason of the deed I wrought.
 He fostered me a babe, and many a kiss
 Lavished upon me, dandling in his arms
 Agamemnon's son, with Leda at his side,
 No less than those Twin Brethren honouring me : 465
 To whom¹—O wretched heart and soul of mine!—
 I have rendered foul return! What veil of gloom
 Can I take for my face?—before me spread
 What cloud, to shun the old man's searching eye?

¹ *i.e.* To Tyndareus and Leda.

Enter Tyndareus.

TYNDAREUS.

Where, where shall I behold my daughter's lord 470
Menelaus? Upon Klytemnestra's tomb
Pouring libations, heard I he had won
After long years to Nauplia with his wife.
Lead me : at his right hand I fain would stand,
And greet a loved one after long space seen. 475

MENELAUS.

Hail, ancient, sharer in the couch of Zeus !

TYNDAREUS.

Hail thou too, Menelaus, kinsman mine !—
Ha, what a curse is blindness to the future !
Yon serpent matricide before the halls
Gleams venom-lightnings, he whom I abhor ! 480
Menelaus, speakest thou to the accurst ?

MENELAUS.

Why not ? He is son to one beloved of me.

TYNDAREUS.

That hero's son he !—such a wretch as he !

MENELAUS.

His son. If hapless, worthy honour still.

TYNDAREUS.

Thou hast grown barbarian, midst barbarians long. 485

MENELAUS.

Greek is it still to honour kindred blood.

TYNDAREUS.

Yea, and to wish not to o'erride the laws.

MENELAUS.

Fate's victims are Fate's thralls in wise men's eyes.

TYNDAREUS.

Hold *thou* by that : not I will hold thereby.

MENELAUS.

[490

Thy rage with grey hairs joined makes not for wisdom.

TYNDAREUS.

Debate of wisdom—what is that to *him* ?
 If right and wrong be manifest to all,
 What man was ever more unwise than this,
 He who on justice never turned an eye,
 Nor to the common law of Greeks appealed ? 495
 When Agamemnon yielded up the ghost,
 His head in sunder by my daughter cleft,—
 A deed most foul, which ne'er will I commend,—
 He ought to have impleaded her for blood 500
 In lawful vengeance, and cast forth the home,
 So from disaster had gained self-control,¹
 Had held by law, and by the fear of God.
 But now, he but partakes his mother's curse ;²

¹ Wedd renders, "had won wisdom's fame."

² Or, "plight" (Wedd).

For, rightfully accounting her as vile, 505
 Viler himself is made by matricide.
 But this, Menelaus, will I ask of thee :—
 If of his wedded wife this man were slain,
 And his son in revenge his mother slay,
 And his son blood with blood requite thereafter, 510
 Where shall the limit of the horror lie ?
 Well did our ancient fathers thus ordain :
 Whoso was stained with blood, they suffered not
 To come before their eyes, to cross their path—
 “ *By exile justify, not blood for blood.* ” 515
 Else one had aye been liable to death
 Still taking the last blood-guilt on his hands.
 For me, sooth, wicked women I abhor,
 My daughter most of all, who slew her lord.
 Helen thy wife shall have no praise of mine : 520
 I will not speak to her ; nor envy thee¹
 Thy journeying unto Troy for such vile wife.
 But, all I can, will I stand up for Law,
 To quell this brute in man, this murder-thirst,
 Which evermore destroyeth lands and towns. 525
 What heart hadst thou, O miscreant, in that hour
 When suppliant unto thee thy mother bared
 Her breast ? I, who saw not the horrors there,
 Yet drown, ah me ! mine agèd eyes with tears.
 One thing, in any wise, attests my words— 530
 Thou art loathed of Gods, punished for matricide
 By terrors and mad ravings. Where is need
 For other witness of things plain to see ?
 Be warned then, Menelaus : strive not thou
 Against the Gods, being fain to help this man. 535

¹ Or, “ nor praise I thee, Who journeyedst ” (Wedd).

Leave him to die by stoning of the folk,
Or never set thou foot on Spartan ground.
Dying, my daughter paid but justice' debt ;
Yet it beseemed not *him* to deal her death.
I in all else have been a happy man 540
Save in my daughters : herein most ill-starred.

CHORUS.

Well fares he who is in his children blest,
And hath not won misfortune world-renowned.

ORESTES.

Ancient, I fear to make defence to thee,
Wherein I cannot but offend thy soul. 545
Let thine old age, which overawes my tongue,
Untrammelled leave the path of my defence,
And I will on, who fear thy grey hairs now.
I know me guilt-stained with a mother's death,
Yet pure herein, that I avenged my sire. 550
What ought I to have done ? Let plea face plea :—
My sire begat me, thy child gave me birth—
The field that from another gat the seed.¹
Without the father, might no offspring be.
I reasoned then—better defend my source 555
Of life, than her that did but foster me.
Thy daughter—I take shame to call her mother—

¹ The same argument is put by Aeschylus (*Eumenides*, 658-666) into the mouth of Apollo, who instances the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus in support of his contention :—

“ The mother of the child named hers is not
The parent, but the new-sown issue's nurse.
The sire is parent : she but harboureth,
A stranger guest, such life as God blasts not.”

In lawless and in wanton dalliance
Sought to a lover :—mine own shame I speak
In telling hers, yet will I utter it :— 560
Aegisthus was that secret paramour.
I slew him and my mother on one altar—
Sinning, yet taking vengeance for my sire.
In that, for which thou threatenest stoning's doom,
Hear, how I rendered service to all Greece : 565
If wives to this bold recklessness shall come,
To slay their husbands, and find refuge then
With sons, entrapping pity with bared breasts,
Then shall they count it nought to slay their lords,
On whatso plea may chance. By deeds of horror—
As thy large utterance is—I annulled this law. [570
In righteous hate my mother did I slay,
Who, when her lord was warring far from home,
Chief of our armies, for all Hellas' sake,
Betrayed him, kept his couch not undefiled. 575
When her sin found her out, she punished not
Herself, but, lest her lord should punish her,
Wreaked on my father chastisement, and slew.
By Heaven !—ill time, I grant, to name the Gods,
Defending murder,—had I justified [580
Her deeds by silence, what had the dead done ?
Had not his hate's Erinnyes haunted me ?
Or on the mother's side fight Goddesses,
And none on his who suffered deeper wrong ?
Thou, ancient, in begetting a vile daughter, 585
Didst ruin me ; for, through her recklessness
Unfathered, I became a matricide.
Mark this—Odysseus' wife Telemachus
Slew not : she took no spouse while lived her lord,
But pure her couch abideth in her halls. 590

Mark this—Apollo at earth's navel-throne
 Gives most true revelation unto men,
 Whom we obey in whatsoe'er he saith.
 Obeying him, my mother did I slay.
 Account ye *him* unholy : yea, slay him ! 595
 He sinned, not I. What ought I to have done ?
 Or hath the God no power to absolve the guilt
 I lay on him ? Whither should one flee then,
 If he which bade me shall not save from death ?
 Nay, say not thou that this was not well done, 600
 Albeit untowardly for me, the doer.
 Happy the life of men whose marriages
 Are blest ; but they for whom they ill betide,
 At home, abroad, are they unfortunate.

CHORUS.

Women were born to mar the lives of men 605
 Ever, unto their surer overthrow.

TYNDAREUS.

Since thou art unabashed, and round of speech,
 Making such answer as to vex my soul,
 Thou shalt inflame me more to urge thy death.
 A fair crown this unto the purposed work 610
 For which I came, to deck my daughter's tomb !
 To Argos' council-gathering will I go
 And thrust the folk on—little thrusting need they !—¹
 That with thy sister thou be stoned to death :—
 Yea, worthier of death than thou is she, 615
 Who egged thee on against thy mother, aye

¹ According to Nauck's reading, " I will set on the folk, will they or not."

Sending to thine ear venomous messages,
Telling of dreams from Agamemnon sent,
Telling how Gods of the Underworld abhorred
Aegisthus' couch,—a hateful thing on earth,— 620
Till the house blazed with fire unnatural.
Menelaus, this I warn thee—yea, will do :—
If thou regard mine hate, our tie of kin,
Shield not this man from death in heaven's despite.
Leave him to die by stoning of the folk, 625
Or never set thou foot in Spartan land !
Thou hast heard—remember ! Choose the impious
not,
To thrust aside the friends that reverence God.
My servants, lead me from this dwelling hence.

[Exit.

ORESTES.

Go, that unharassed what I yet would say 630
May reach his ears, escaped thine hindering age.
Menelaus, why pace to and fro in thought,
Treading the mazes of perplexity ?

MENELAUS.

Let be : somewhat I muse within myself :
I know not whither in this chance to turn. 635

ORESTES.

End not thy pondering straightway : hearken first
Unto my pleading, and resolve thee then.

MENELAUS.

Speak ; thou hast well said. Silence is sometimes
Better than speech, and speech sometimes than silence.

ORESTES.

Now will I speak. Better are many words 640
Than few, and clearer to be understood.
Menelaus, give me nothing of thine own :
That thou receivedst from my sire repay.
I meant not treasure : if thou save my life,
Treasure, of all I have most dear, is this. 645
Grant I do wrong : I ought, for a wrong's sake,
To win of thee a wrong ; for Agamemnon
Wrongly to Ilium led the hosts of Greece :—
Not that himself had sinned, but sought to heal
The sin and the wrong-doing of thy wife. 650
This boon for boon thou oughtest render me.
He verily sold his life for thee, as friends
Should do for friends, hard-toiling under shield,
That so thou mightest win thy wife again.
This hadst thou there : to me requite the same. 655
Toil one day's space for my sake : for my life
Stand up. I ask thee not, wear out ten years.
Aulis received my sister's blood : I spare
Thee this : I bid not slay Hermionê.
Thou needst must, when I fare as now I fare, 660
Have vantage, and the debt must I forgive.
But to my hapless father give my life,
And hers, so long unwed, my sister's life.
For heirless, if I die, I leave his house.
'Tis *hopeless*, wilt thou say ?—thine hour is this. 665
In desperate need ought friends to help their friends.
When Fortune gives her boons, what need of friends ?
Her help sufficeth, when she wills to help.
All Greece believeth that thou lov'st thy wife,—
Not cozening thee by soft words say I this :— 670

By her I pray thee ! . . . (*aside*) woe for mine affliction !
 To what pass am I come ! Why grovel thus ?¹
 Yet,—'tis for our whole house I make appeal ! . . .
 O brother of my father, deem that *he*
 Hears this, who lies 'neath earth, that over thee 675
 His spirit hovers : what I say he saith.
 This, urged with tears, moans, pleas of misery,
 Have I said, and have claimed my life of thee,
 Seeking what all men seek, not I alone.

CHORUS.

I too beseech thee, woman though I am, 680
 To succour those in need : thou hast the power.

MENELAUS.

Orestes, verily I reverence thee,
 And fain would help thee bear thy load of ills.
 Yea, duty bids that, where God gives the power,
 Kinsmen should one another's burdens bear, 685
 Even unto death, or slaying of their foes.
 But the power—would the Gods might give it me !
 I come, a single spear, with none ally,
 Long wandering with travail manifold,
 With feeble help of friends yet left to me. 690
 In battle could we never overcome
 Pelasgian Argos. If we might prevail
 By soft words, this is our hope's utmost bound.
 For with faint means how should a man achieve
 Great things ?—'twere witless even to wish for this.
 For, in the first rush of a people's rage, [695
 'Twere even as one would quench a ravening fire.

¹ Or (Wedd), "Yet why complain ?"

But if one gently yield him to their stress,
Slacken the sheet, and watch the season due,
Their storm might spend its force. When lulls the
blast, 700

Lightly thou mightest win thy will of them.
In them is ruth, high spirit is in them—
A precious thing to whoso bides his time.
Now Tyndareus and the city will I seek
To sway to temperance in their stormy mood. 705

A ship, if one have strained the mainsheet taut,
Dips deep; but rights again, the mainsheet eased.
For Heaven hateth over-vehemence,
And citizens hate. I ought, I grant, to save thee—
By wisdom, not defiance of the strong. 710

I cannot—as thou haply dream'st—by force
Save thee. How should I with my single spear
Triumph o'er all the ills that compass thee?
To move this land of Argos to relent¹ 715
Never we stooped yet!—now is bitter need
That prudent men be bondmen unto fate.

[Exit.

ORESTES.

O nothing-worth—save in a woman's cause
To lead a host!—craven in friends' defence! [720
Turn'st from me?—fleest?—are Agamemnon's deeds

¹ This passage is a *crux* of commentators. Wedd interprets,

“Never have we been wont to train the land
Of Argos to be craven: need is now
That we, as wise, be, &c.”

But could a king of Sparta, though brother of the late Argive king, have talked, with any show of reason, of having had part in the training of Argives who had never owned his authority in peace or war?

Forgot? Ah father, friendless in affliction!
Woe's me, I am betrayed: hope lives no more
Of refuge from the Argives' doom of death!
For my one haven of safety was this man.
But lo, I see my best-beloved of men,
Yon Pylades, from Phocis hastening.
Glad sight! A loyal friend in trouble's hour
Shows welcomer than calm to mariners.

725

Enter Pylades.

PYLADES.

Down the city's streets with haste unwonted unto thee
I came;
For I heard of Argos' council—yea, mine eyes beheld
the same—
For thy doom and for thy sister's, as to slay you even
now.
What means this?—how fares thine health, thy state?
—of age-mates dearest thou,
Yea, of friends and kinsfolk; each and all of these thou
art to me.

730

ORESTES.

Ruined are we!—in a word to tell thee all my misery.

PYLADES.

Mine o'erthrowing shall thy fall be: one are friends in
woe and bliss.

735

ORESTES.

Traitor foul to me and to my sister Menelaus is.

PYLADES.

Small the marvel—by the traitor wife the husband
traitor made!

ORESTES.

Even as he had come not, so his debt to me hath he repaid.

PYLADES.

How then?—hath he set his foot in very deed this land within?

ORESTES.

Late he came; but early stood convicted traitor to his kin.

740

PYLADES.

And his wife, arch-traitress, hath he brought her, sailing hitherward?

ORESTES.

'Tis not he hath brought her, nay, 'twas she that hither brought her lord.

PYLADES.

Where is she, who most of women hath the Achaians overthrown?

ORESTES.

In mine house—if yonder dwelling may henceforth be called mine own.

PYLADES.

Thou, what wouldst thou of thy father's brother by thy pleadings gain?

745

ORESTES.

That he would not see me and my sister by the people slain.

PYLADES.

By the Gods, to this what said he?—fain would I know
this of thee.

ORESTES.

Cautious was he—as the false friend still to friends is
wont to be.

PYLADES.

Fleeing to what plea for refuge?—all I know when this
I hear.

ORESTES.

He had come, the father who begat the daughters with-
out peer.

PYLADES.

750

Tyndareus thou meanest,—for his daughter haply filled
with ire.

ORESTES.

Rightly guessed: such kinsman Menelaus chose before
my sire.

PYLADES.

Dared he not lay hand unto thy burden, not when here
he stood?

ORESTES.

Hero is there none in him!—mid women valiant he of
mood.

PYLADES.

Then art thou in depth of evil: death for thee must
needs abide.

ORESTES.

755

Touching this our murder must the vote of Argos' folk
decide.

PYLADES.

What shall this determine?—tell me, for mine heart is full of dread.

ORESTES.

Death or life. The word that names the dateless doom is quickly said.

PYLADES.

Flee then : yonder palace-halls forsake thou : with thy sister flee.

ORESTES.

Seëst thou not?—warded round on every hand by guards are we. 760

PYLADES.

Lines of spears and shields I marked : the pass of every street they close.

ORESTES.

Yea, beleaguered are we, even as a city by her foes.

PYLADES.

Ask me also of my plight ; for, like to thee, undone am I.

ORESTES.

Yea?—of whom? This shall be evil heaped on my calamity.

PYLADES.

Strophius banished me mine home : my father's wrath hath thrust me thence. 765

ORESTES.

What the charge? 'Twixt thee and him?—or hath the nation found offence?

PYLADES.

That I helped thee slay thy mother, this he names an
impious thing.

ORESTES.

Woe is me! the anguish of mine anguish unto thee
must cling!

PYLADES.

I am not a Menelaus: these afflictions must I bear.

ORESTES.

Fear'st thou not lest Argos doom thee with my deed
my death to share? 770

PYLADES.

I belong not unto them to punish, but to Phocis-land.

ORESTES.

Fearful is the people's rage, when evil men its course
command.

PYLADES.

Nay, but when they take them honest chiefs, they
counsel honest rede.

ORESTES.

Come, let thou and I commune—¹

PYLADES.

As touching what imperious need?

¹ Or (Wedd), "Sooth said: I must plead before them.
Pyl. Touching, etc."

ORESTES.

Should I go and tell the people—

PYLADES.

That thou wroughtest righteously? 775

ORESTES.

Taking vengeance for my father?

PYLADES.

Glad might they lay hold on thee.

ORESTES.

How then, cower and die in silence?

PYLADES.

This in craven sort were done.

ORESTES.

What then do?

PYLADES.

Hast any hope of life, if here thou linger on?

ORESTES.

None.

PYLADES.

But is there hope, in going, of deliverance
from the ill?

ORESTES.

Haply might there be.

PYLADES.

Were this not better, then, than sitting still ? 780

ORESTES.

Shall I go then ?

PYLADES.

Yea ; for, dying, hero-like thou shalt have died.

ORESTES.

Good : I 'scape the brand of " craven."

PYLADES.

More than if thou here abide.

ORESTES.

And the right is mine.

PYLADES.

Pray only all men so may view the deed.

ORESTES.

Haply some might pity—

PYLADES.

Yea, thy princely birth shall strongly plead.

ORESTES.

At my father's death indignant.

PYLADES.

Full in view are all these things. 785

ORESTES.

On ! unmanly is inglorious death !

PYLADES.

Thy saying bravely rings.

ORESTES.

Shall we then unto my sister tell our purpose ?

PYLADES.

Nay, by heaven !

ORESTES.

Sooth, she might break into weeping.

PYLADES.

So were evil omen given.

ORESTES.

Surely then were silence better.

PYLADES.

Lesser hindrance shouldst thou find.

ORESTES.

Yet, one stumblingblock confronts me—

790

PYLADES.

What new thing is in thy mind ?

ORESTES.

Lest the Fiends by madness stay me.

PYLADES.

Nay, thy weakness I will tend.

ORESTES.

Loathly task to touch the sick !

PYLADES.

Ah, not to me for thee, O friend.

ORESTES.

Yet beware the taint of this my madness.

PYLADES.

Base misgivings, hence !

ORESTES.

Can it be thou wilt not shrink ?

PYLADES.

For friends to shrink were foul offence.

ORESTES.

On then, pilot of my footsteps. 795

PYLADES.

Sweet is this my loving care.

ORESTES.

Even to my father's grave-mound guide me on.

PYLADES.

What wouldst thou there ?

ORESTES.

I would pray him to deliver.

PYLADES.

Yea, 'twere just it should be so.

ORESTES.

But my mother's tomb, I would not see it—

PYLADES.

For she was a foe.

Haste then, lest the Argive vote have doomed thee ere
thou reach the place,

Yielding up thy frame with sickness wasted unto mine
embrace. 800

Through the streets unshamed, and taking of the
rabble little heed,

I will bear thee onward. Wherein shall I show me
friend indeed,

If mine helpfulness in terrible affliction be not shown?

ORESTES.

Herein true is that old saying—" *Get thee friends, not
kin alone.*"

He whose soul is knit with thine, although he be not
of thy kin, 805

Better than a thousand kinsfolk this is for thy friend to
win.

[*Exeunt Orestes and Pylades.*]

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

The stately fortune, the prowess exceeding,

Whose high vaunts rang through the land of Greece,

Yea, rang where Simoïs' waters flow,
 For Atreus' sons was its weal made woe 810
 For the fruit of the curse sown long ago,
 When on Tantalus' sons came, misery-breeding,
 The strife for the lamb of the golden fleece,—
 Breeding a banquet, with horrors spread,
 For the which was the blood of a king's babes shed,
 Whence murder, tracking the footsteps red
 Of murder, haunts with the wound aye bleeding
 The Atreides twain without surcease.

(Ant.)

O deed fair-seeming, O deed unholy!—
 With hand steel-armed through the throat to shear
 Of a mother, and unto the sun to show [820
 The blade dark-crimsoned with murder's blow!—
 Though vile, though frantic as madness-throe
 Was the mother's crime, the transgressors' folly.¹
 Ah, Tyndareus' daughter, in frenzied fear
 Of death, shrieked, shrieked in her anguish dread,
 "Son, slaying thy mother, the right dost thou
 tread
 Under foot! O beware lest thy grace to the dead,
 Thy sire, in dishonour enwrap thee wholly,
 As a fire that for ever thy name shall sear!" 830

(Epode.)

What affliction were greater, what cause of weeping,
 What pitiful sorrow in any land,
 Than a son in the blood of a mother steeping
 His hand? How in madness's bacchanal leaping
 He is whirled, for the deed that was wrought of his
 hand,

¹ *i.e.* That of the adulterous pair Klytemnestra and Aegisthus.

With the hell-hounds' wings on his track swift-sweeping,
 With eyes wild-rolling in terror unsleeping—
 Agamemnon's scion, a matricide banned !
 Ah wretch, that his heart should fail not nor falter,
 When, over her vesture's broideries golden, 840
 The mother's breast of his eyes was beholden !
 But he slaughtered her like to a beast at the altar,
 For the wrongs of a father had whetted the brand.

Enter Electra.

ELECTRA.

Dames, sure woe-worn Orestes hath not fled
 These halls o'erborne by madness heaven-sent ? 845

CHORUS.

Nay, nay, to Argos' people hath he gone
 To stand the appointed trial for his life,
 Whereon your doom rests, or to live or die.

ELECTRA.

Ah me ! what hath he done ? Who wrought on him
 [To go where foes shall mock his misery ?] ¹

CHORUS.

Pylades. Lo, yon messenger draws nigh 850
 To tell, meseems, how fared thy brother there.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Child of our war-chief, hapless, woe-worn one,
 Agamemnon's daughter, lady Electra, hear
 The woeful tale, wherewith I come to thee.

¹ A line suggested by Paley, to complete defective distich.

ELECTRA.

Alas ! we are undone : thy speech is plain. 855
 Thou com'st, meseems, a messenger of ill.

MESSENGER.

Pelasgia's vote this day hath doomed that thou,
 O hapless, and thy brother, are to die.

ELECTRA.

Woe ! that I looked for cometh, which long since
 I feared, and pined with wailings for my fate ! 860
 How went the trial ? Before Argos' folk
 What pleadings ruined us, and doomed to die ?
 Tell, ancient, must I under stoning hands,
 Or by the steel, gasp out my dying breath,
 I, who am sharer in my brother's woes ? 865

MESSENGER.

It chanced that I was entering the gates
 Out of the country, fain to learn thy state,
 And of Orestes ; for unto thy sire
 Aye was I loyal : thine house fostered me,
 A poor man, yet true-hearted to his friends. 870
 Then throngs I saw to seats on yon height climb
 Where first, as men say, Danaus, by Aegyptus
 Impeached, in general session gathered us.
 Marking the crowd, I asked a citizen :
 " What news in Argos ? Hath a bruit of foes 875
 Startled the city of the Danaïds ? "
 But he, " Dost thou not mark Orestes there
 Draw near to run the race whose goal is death ? "
 Would I had ne'er seen that unlooked-for sight—

Pylades with thy brother moving on ; 880
 This, sickness-palsied, with down-drooping head ;
 That, as a brother, in his friend's affliction
 Afflicted, tending like a nurse the sick.
 When now the Argive gathering was full,
 A herald rose and cried : " Who fain would speak 885
 Whether Orestes ought to live or die
 For matricide ? " Talthybius thereupon
 Rose, helper of thy sire when Troy was sacked.
 He spake—subservient ever to the strong—
 Half-heartedly, extolling high thy sire, 890
 But praising not thy brother ; intertwined
 Fair words and foul—that he laid down a law
 Right ill for parents : so was glancing still
 With flattering eye upon Aegisthus' friends.
 Such is the herald tribe : lightly they skip 895
 To fortune's minions' side : their friend is he
 Who in a state hath power and beareth rule.
 Next after him prince Diomedes spake.
 Thee nor thy brother would he have them slay,
 But exile you, of reverence to the Gods. 900
 Then murmured some that good his counsel was ;
 Some praised it not. Thereafter rose up one
 Of tongue unbridled, stout in impudence,
 An Argive, yet no Argive, thrust on us :¹
 In bluster and coarse-grained fluency confident, 905
 Still plausible to trap the folk in mischief :
 For when an evil heart with winning tongue
 Persuades the crowd, ill is it for the state :
 Whoso with understanding counsel well

¹ One who had obtained the citizenship by means repugnant to decent citizens. Wedd interprets, "tool of others."

Profit the state—ere long, if not straightway. 910
 Thus ought we on each leader of men to look,
 And so esteem : for both be in like case,
 The speaker, and the man in honour set.¹
 Thee and Orestes he bade stone to death.
 But Tyndareus still prompted him the words 915
 That best told, as he laboured for your death.
 To plead against him then another rose,
 No dainty presence, but a manful man,
 In town and market-circle seldom found,
 A yeoman—such as are the land's one stay,— 920
 Yet shrewd in grapple of words, when this he would ;²
 A stainless man, who lived a blameless life.
 He moved that they should crown Agamemnon's son
 Orestes, since he dared avenge his sire,
 Slaying the wicked and the godless wife 925
 Who sapped our strength:—none would take shield on
 arm,
 Or would forsake his home to march to war,
 If men's house-warders be seduced the while
 By stayers at home, and couches be defiled.
 To honest men he seemed to speak right well ; 930
 And none spake after. Then thy brother rose,
 And said, " Lords of the land of Inachus,—
 Of old Pelasgians, later Danaus' sons,—
 'Twas in your cause, no less than in my sire's,
 I slew my mother ; for, if their lords' blood 935

¹ Wedd interprets, "and the appraiser of his speech," *i.e.* the audience, who are thus pronounced to be as responsible for the decision as the orator.

² Variouslly rendered : by Wedd, "Yet wisely eager now for war of words:" by Paley, "Yet shrewd, and fain to assail that tonguester's plea."

Shall bring no guilt on wives, make haste to die ;
 Else must ye live in thralldom to your wives,
 And so transgress against all rightfulness.
 For now the traitress to my father's couch
 Is dead : but if ye shall indeed slay me, 940
 Law is annulled : better men died straightway ;
 Since for no crime shall wives lack daring now."
 They would not hear, though well he spake, meseemed.
 That knave prevailed, who to the mob appealed,
 Who called on them to slay thy brother and thee. 945
 Hapless Orestes scarce could gain the boon
 By stoning not to die. By his own hand
 He pledged him to leave life on this same day
 With thee. Now from the gathering Pylades
 Bringeth him weeping ; and his friends attend 950
 Lamenting with strong crying. So he comes
 To thee, sight bitter and woeful to behold.
 Prepare the sword, or halter for thy neck :
 For thou must leave the light. Thy princely birth
 Nought hath availed thee, nor the Pythian King 955
 Apollo tripod-throned ; nay, ruined thee.

CHORUS.

O misery-burdened maiden, how art thou
 Speechless, with veiled head bowed unto the earth,
 As who shall run her course of moans and wails !

ELECTRA.

(Str.)

Land of Pelasgia, I waken the wailing, 960
 Scoring red furrows with fingers white
 In my cheeks, as with blood-streaks I mar them, and
 hailing

On the head of me blows, which she claims as her
right

Who is queen o'er the dead 'neath the earth that
are lying.

On thy locks let the steel of the shearing light,
Cyclopan land ; break forth into crying,

For the woes of the house of thy princes sighing.

Ah pity upwelling, ah tears unavailing

For those in this hour that go forth to their dying,
Erst chieftains of Hellas's battle-might. 970

(*Ant.*)

Gone—gone ! Lo, the lineage of Pelops hath fled
Into nothingness wholly ; and passed away

Is the pride of a house in bliss high-seated,

By Heaven's jealousy blasted ; and hungry to slay

Is the doom that the citizens spake death-dealing.

Ah, travail-worn tribes that endure but a day

Amid weeping, behold how the morrow, revealing

The death of your hopes, cometh destiny-sealing ;

And to each man his several sorrows are meted,

Unto each in his turn, through the years on-
stealing, 980

Nor ever abide we at one stay.

O might I win to the rock 'twixt heaven¹

And earth suspended in circles swinging,

Upborne by the golden chains scarce-clinging,

The shard from Olympus riven ;

¹ The old poets fabled that the punishment of Tantalus, ancestor of the house of Atreus, was to lie in Tartarus beneath a rock, which at every moment seemed about to fall and crush him. Here Euripides, as some think, identifies this rock with the sun, which his master Anaxagoras described as a red-hot mass of stone hung in heaven.

That to Tantalus, father of ancient time,
 I might shriek with laments wild-ringing ;
 For of his loins came those sires of our name
 Who looked upon that infatuate crime
 Wrought when the car-steeds' winged feet chased,
 When the four-horsed chariot of Pelops raced 990
 By the strand, and his hand dashed Myrtilus down
 Unto hell, in the swell of the sea to drown,

 When the race was o'er
 Of the wheels that sped
 By the white foam-fringe of the surf-lashed shore
 Of Geraistum's head.

For a curse heavy-burdened with mourning
 Fell on mine house for the deed,
 When Maia's son from his fold¹
 Brought the lamb of the fleece of gold,
 A portent whence ruin was rolled
 Upon Atreus, a king's overturning : 1000
 And the sun-car's wingèd speed
 From the ghastly strife turned back,
 Changing his westering track
 Through the heavens unto where, blush-burning,
 Rose Dawn with her single steed.

Lo, Zeus to another star-highway bending
 The course of the sailing Pleiads seven !
 Lo, death after death in succession unending
 By the banquet, named of Thyestes, given,
 And by Cretan Aeropê's couch of shame
 And treason !—the consummation came 1010
 Of all, upon me and my father descending
 In our house's affliction foredoomed in heaven.

¹ See note to *Electra*, l. 699.

CHORUS.

Lo, where thy brother hitherward comes faring,
Doomed by the vote of Argos' folk to die ;
Yea, also Pylades, above all other
Truest of friends, close-cleaving as a brother,
Cometh, Orestes' fainting steps upbearing,
Ever with heedful feet a yokemate nigh.

Enter Orestes and Pylades.

ELECTRA.

Woe's me ! I mourn to see thee, brother, stand
Before the tomb, before the pyre of death.
Woe's me again ! As gaze mine eyes on thee 1020
With this last look, my spirit faileth me.

ORESTES.

Nay, hush ; from wailings womanlike forbear.
Bow to thy fate : 'tis piteous ; none the less
Needs must we bear the doom that stands hard by.

ELECTRA.

Nay, how be hushed ? To see yon Sun-god's light
No more is given to us unhappy ones. [1025

ORESTES.

Ah, slay me not ! Enough that Argive hands
Have slain a wretch : let be the imminent ills.

ELECTRA.

Woe for thy youth, for thine untimely death,
Orestes ! Life, not death, had been thy due. 1030

ORESTES.

Ah, by the Gods, I pray, unman me not,
Nor bring to tears by mention of our woes.

ELECTRA.

We die ! I cannot but bemoan our fate.
All mortals grieve for precious life foregone.

ORESTES.

This is our day of doom : the noose must coil 1035
About our necks, or our hands grasp the sword.

ELECTRA.

Brother, thou slay me, that no Argive slay,
With outrage foul to Agamemnon's child.

ORESTES.

Suffice the mother's blood : I will not slay thee.
Die in what wise thou wilt by thine own hand. 1040

ELECTRA.

O yea : I will not lag behind thy sword.
But oh to lay mine arms about thy neck !

ORESTES.

Enjoy that vain delight, if joy it be
For those that stand at death's door to embrace.

ELECTRA.

Dearest, who bear'st a name desirable 1045
And sweet on sister's lips !—one soul with mine !

ORESTES.

Ah, thou wilt melt me ! Fain would I reply
With arms of love ! Wretch, wherefore shame I now ?
Ah, sister-bosom, dear embrace to me !
In children's stead, instead of wedded arms, 1050
This farewell to the hapless is vouchsafed.

ELECTRA (*sighs*).

Oh might the selfsame sword, if this may be,
Slay us, one coffin cedar-wrought receive !

ORESTES.

Most sweet were this : yet, how forlorn of friends
Thou seest are we, who cannot claim one tomb ! 1055

ELECTRA.

Spake Menelaus not for thee, to plead
Against thy death—base traitor to my sire ?

ORESTES.

His face he showed not—fixed upon the throne
His hope, with good heed not to save his friends ! 1060
Come, prove we by our deeds our high-born strain,
And worthily of Agamemnon die.
And I will show all men my royal blood,
Plunging the sword into mine heart : but thou
Must match with thine the unflinching deed I do.
Sit thou as umpire, Pylades, to our death. 1065
Meetly lay out the bodies of the dead :
Bear to our sire's grave, and with him entomb.
Farewell : I go, thou seest, to do the deed. [*Going*.

PYLADES.

Tarry :—first, one reproach have I for thee :
Thou didst expect that I would live, thou dead ! 1070

ORESTES.

How, what hast thou to do to die with me ?

PYLADES.

Dost ask ? Without thy friendship what were life ?

ORESTES.

Thy mother *thou* slew'st not, as I—woe's me ?

PYLADES.

I shared thy deed, thy sufferings must I share.

ORESTES.

Restore thee to thy sire ; die not with me. 1075
Thou hast a city,—none to me is left,—
A father's home, a haven wide of wealth.
Thou canst not wed this maiden evil-starred
Whom I for friendship's sake betrothed to thee.
Yet take thee another bride and rear thee sons : 1080
The looked-for tie 'twixt thee and me is not.
Now, O dear name of my companionship,
Farewell !—not *this* for us, perchance for thee :
For us, the dead, is no glad *faring-well* !

PYLADES.

Far dost thou fail of hitting mine intent. 1085
May neither fruitful earth receive my blood,

Nor sunlit sky, if I forsake thee ever,
 Deliver mine own soul, and fall from thee !
 I shared the murder, I disown it not.
 All did I plan for which thou sufferest now ; 1090
 Therefore I needs must die with thee, with her.
 For I account her pledged of thee to me,
 My wife. What tale fair-seeming shall I tell,
 Coming to Delphi, to the Phocians' burg,
 Who was your close friend ere your fortunes fell, 1095
 Now, in calamity, no more thy friend ?
 Nay, nay, this task is mine no less than thine.
 Since we shall surely die, debate we now
 How Menelaus too may share our woe.

ORESTES.

Dear friend, would I could look on this, and die ! 1100

PYLADES.

Hearken to me, and that sword-stroke defer.

ORESTES.

I wait, if so I avenge me on my foe.

PYLADES (*pointing to Chorus*).

Speak low !—I put in women little trust.

ORESTES.

Fear not for these : all here be friends to us.

PYLADES.

Slay Helen—Menelaus' bitter grief ! 1105

ORESTES.

How? Ready am I, if this may well befall.

PYLADES.

With sword-thrust : in these halls she hideth now.

ORESTES.

Even so—and setteth now her seal on all.

PYLADES.

She seals no more, when Hades hails her bride.

ORESTES.

Nay, how? She hath barbarian serving-men. 1110

PYLADES.

Whom? Phrygians!—'tis not I would quail for such.

ORESTES.

Ay,—chiefs of mirrors and of odours they.

PYLADES.

So? Hath she come with Trojan luxury hither?

ORESTES.

Ay; for her mansion Hellas is too strait.

PYLADES.

Nought is the slave against the freeborn man. 1115

ORESTES.

This deed but done, I dread not twice to die.

PYLADES.

Nay, neither I, so I avenge but thee.

ORESTES.

Declare the thing ; unfold what thou wouldst say.

PYLADES.

We will into the house, as deathward-bound.

ORESTES.

Thus much I grasp, but grasp not yet the rest. 1120

PYLADES.

We will make moan unto her of our plight.

ORESTES.

That she may weep—rejoicing in her heart !

PYLADES.

Ah ! we shall be in like case then with her !¹

ORESTES.

Thereafter, how shall we strive out the strife ?

PYLADES.

Hidden beneath these cloaks will we have swords. 1125

ORESTES.

But in her thralls' sight² how shall she be slain ?

¹ *i.e.* Pretending to sorrow, but inwardly exulting, as having her in our power.

² Paley takes *πρόσθεν* of *time* —“ First, of her thralls what

PYLADES.

In several chambers will we bar them out.

ORESTES.

And whoso keeps not silence must we slay.

PYLADES.

Then shall the deed's self point the path to us,—

ORESTES.

To Helen's death : the watchword know I well. 1130

PYLADES.

Thou say'st : and hear how noble is mine intent.
 For, if we loosed the sword against a dame
 More virtuous, were that slaying infamous.
 But *she* shall for all Hellas' sake be punished,¹
 Whose sires she slew, whose children she destroyed,
 Whose brides she widowed of their yokefellows. [1135
 There shall be shouting, fires to heaven shall blaze,
 With blessings many invoked on thee and me,
 For that we shed a wicked woman's blood.
 Slay her, thou shalt not *matricide* be called : 1140
 This cast aside, thou shalt find fairer lot,
 Styled Slayer of Helen, a nation's murderess.
 It must not be that Menelaus thrive,

slaughter shall there be ?" then Pylades' answer implies, not necessarily any. Wedd interprets, " But, ere her thralls die, etc."

¹ Following Nauck's punctuation, and reading τ for δ in 1135.

The while thy sire, thou, and thy sister die,
 Thy mother—*that* I pass, unmeet to say,— 1145
 And that he hold thine halls who won his bride
 By Agamemnon's spear!—may I not live
 If we shall not against her draw the sword!¹
 If haply we achieve not Helen's death,
 Yon palace will we fire, and so will die. 1150
 For, of two glories, one we will not miss,
 To die with honour, or with honour 'scape.

CHORUS.

This child of Tyndareus, who hath brought shame
 On womankind, deserves all women's hate.

ORESTES.

Ha! nought is better than a loyal friend— 1155
 Nor wealth, nor lordship! Sure, of none account
 The crowd is, weighed against one noble friend.
 Aegisthus' punishment didst thou devise;
 On peril's brink thou stoodest at my side;
 And profferest now avenging on my foes, 1160
 Nor stand'st aloof;—but I will cease from praise,
 For weariness cometh even of overpraise.
 I must in any wise give up the ghost,
 Yet fain would sting mine enemies ere I die,
 That my betrayers I may so requite, 1165
 And they which made me miserable may groan.
 Agamemnon's son am I, the son of one
 Held worthy to rule Greece—no despot, yet
 A god's might had he. Him I will not shame,
 Brooking a slave's death; but as a free man 1170

¹ Reading ἤν σπασώμεθα.

Mid vengeance on Menelaus breathe out life.
 Might we gain one thing, fortunate were we
 If, past hope, chanced to us deliverance,
 To slay and not be slain. For this I pray :
 For sweet is this I wish for—through the lips 1175
 To cheer the heart with winged words costing nought.

ELECTRA.

I, brother, have this same thing found, meseems,—
 Deliverance for thee, for him, for me.

ORESTES.

God's foresight claim'st thou !¹—yet why say I this,
 Since I know wisdom dwelleth in thine heart ? 1180

ELECTRA.

Hearken then : give thou also (*to Pyl.*) heed hereto.

ORESTES.

Speak : there is pleasure even in hope of good.²

ELECTRA.

Thou knowest Helen's daughter ?—wherefore ask ?

ORESTES.

I know—my mother nursed Hermionê.

ELECTRA.

Even she hath gone to Klytemnestra's tomb. 1185

¹ Paley understands, "Thou mean'st God's providence—why talk of this?" *i.e.* we cannot expect divine intervention. Wedd interprets, "Some plan by God inspired thou mean'st. But where? Sooth, I know, etc."

² Or, "in thy hint of good."

ORESTES.

With what intent?—now what hope whisperest thou?

ELECTRA.

To pour drink-offerings o'er our mother's tomb.

ORESTES.

Wherein to safety tendeth this thou nam'st?

ELECTRA.

Seize her, our hostage, when she cometh back.

ORESTES.

What peril-salve for us three friends were this? 1190

ELECTRA.

If, Helen slain, Menelaus seek to harm
Thee, him, or me,—this bond of friends is one,—
Cry, thou wilt slay Hermionê: the sword
Drawn must thou hold hard at the maiden's neck.
Then, if Menelaus, lest his daughter die, 1195
Will save thee, seeing Helen fallen in blood,
Yield to her sire's embrace the maiden's form.
But if, controlling not his furious mood,
He seek to slay thee, pierce the maid's neck through.
I ween, though swelling be his port at first, 1200
His wrath at last shall cool. Nor brave nor stout
By nature is he. This I find for us
The bulwark of deliverance. I have said.

ORESTES.

O thou who hast the spirit of a man,

Albeit in body woman manifest,¹ 1205
 How worthier far art thou to live than die !
 Such woman, Pylades, shalt thou, alas !
 Forfeit, or living win in wedlock blest.

PYLADES.

God grant it so, that to the Phocians' burg
 She come, for honour meet of spousals proud ! 1210

ORESTES.

But to the house when comes Hermionê ?
 For all that thou hast said is passing well,
 So we may take this impious father's whelp.

ELECTRA.

In sooth, I ween, she is nigh the palace now,
 For the time's lapse runs consonant thereto. 1215

ORESTES.

'Tis well. Sister Electra, tarry thou
 Before the halls to meet the maiden's steps.
 Keep watch lest any,—brother of our sire,
 Or ally—ere this deed be wrought, draw near
 The house, forestalling us. Give token thou— 1220
 Smite on the door, or send a cry within.
 Now pass we in, and for this latest strife
 Arm we our hands with falchions, Pylades :
 For thou art fellow-toiler in my toil.
 Father, who dwellest in dark halls of night, 1225
 Thy son Orestes bids thee come to help

¹ Another interpretation, " But a form peerless among womankind."

Those in sore need. For thy sake suffer I
Wrongfully—by thy brother am betrayed,
Though I wrought righteousness. I fain would seize
His wife, and slay : be thou our help herein ! 1230

ELECTRA.

Come, father, come, if thou in earth's embrace
Hearest thy children cry, who die for thee !

PYLADES.

My father's kinsman,¹ to my prayers withal,
Agamemnon, hearken ; save thy children thou.

ORESTES.

I slew my mother—

PYLADES.

But I grasped the sword !— 1235

ELECTRA.

I cheered thee on, snapped trammels of delay !—

ORESTES.

Sire, for thine help !

ELECTRA.

Nor I abandoned thee !

PYLADES.

Wilt thou not hear this challenge—save thine own ?

ORESTES.

I pour thee tears for offerings !

¹ Pylades' mother was Agamemnon's sister.

ELECTRA.

Wailings I !

PYLADES.

Cease ye, and let us haste unto the deed ; 1240
For if prayers, javelin-like, pierce earth, he hears.
Forefather Zeus, and Justice' majesty,
To him, to me, to her, grant happy speed !
Three friends—their venture one, the forfeit one,—
Owe all the selfsame debt, to live or die. 1245

[Orestes and Pylades enter the palace.]

ELECTRA.

(*Str.*)

Dames of Mycenæ, beloved of me,
In the Argives' Pelasgian dwelling the noblest ye—

CHORUS.

What wouldst thou say unto us, O Princess?—for thine
This name is yet in the city of Danaus' line. 1250

ELECTRA.

Set ye yourselves—along the highway some,
And on yon bypath some—to watch the house.

CHORUS.

But tell to me, friend, why wouldst thou win
This service of me for thy need ?

ELECTRA.

I fear lest one yon palace within,
Who hath set him to work a bloody deed,
May earn him but murder for murder's meed.

Chorus breaks into two parties.

SEMICHORUS 1.

On, hasten we : for me, upon this path
Will I keep watch, that toward the sunrise looks.

SEMICHORUS 2.

And I on this, that trendeth to the west. 1260

ELECTRA.

Sideward glance ye—O rightward and leftward aye
Turn ye your eyes : then gaze on the rearward way.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Even as thou bidd'st, we obey.

(Ant.)

ELECTRA.

Now cast ye around you your eyes : yea, wide
Through the veil of your tresses flash them on every
side.

SEMICHORUS 2.

Who is this on the path ?—take heed !—what peasant
is here [1270
That strayeth with haunting feet to thine halls anear ?

ELECTRA.

Undone, friends !—to our foes shall he reveal
Straightway the armèd lions lurking there !

SEMICHORUS 2.

Nay, untrodden the path is—have no fear,
O friend—for the which was thy doubt.

ELECTRA.

And thou—doth thine highway abide yet clear ?
If thou hast good tidings, ah, tell it out
If void be the space yon forecourt about.

SEMICHORUS 1.

All here is well. Look thou unto thy side :
To us draws nigh no man of Danaus' sons.

SEMICHORUS 2.

Thy tale is one with mine : no stir is here. 1280

ELECTRA.

Go to, through the gates as a shaft let me speed my
cry :—

Within, ho !—why do ye tarry, and no foe nigh,
Your hands with the slaughter to dye ?

They hear me not !—woe for my miseries !

Ha, at her beauty are the swords struck dumb ?

Soon will some Argive mailed, with racing feet

That rush to rescue, burst into the halls ! 1290

Watch with more heed,—no time to sit still this !

Bestir ye, hither these, those thitherward.

CHORUS.

I scan the diverse ways—on every hand I gaze—

HELEN (*within*).

Pelasgian Argos, ho !—I am foully slain !

SEMICHORUS 1.

Heard ye ?—the men imbrue their hands in blood !

SEMICHORUS 2.

Helen's the wild shriek is, to guess thereat.

ELECTRA.

O power of Zeus, of Zeus—Eternal power,
Come, aid my friends in this supremest hour ! 1300

HELEN (*within*)

Husband, I die ! So near, yet help'st thou not !

ELECTRA.

Stab ye her—slay her—destroy !
Let them leap, the double-edged falchions twain,
From your grasp with a furious joy
Upon her who left husband and sire, who hath slain
Beside that river of Troy
Many a Greek by the spear who died,
When the tears fell fast for the iron rain
That flashed Skamander's eddies beside ! 1310

CHORUS.

Hush ye, O hush : I hear a footfall pass
But now into the path that skirts the house.

ELECTRA.

Belovèd dames, into the jaws of death
Hermionè cometh ! Let our outcry cease :
For into the net's meshes, lo, she falls. 1315
Fair quarry this shall be, so she be trapped.
Back to your stations step¹ with quiet look,

¹ Wedd renders, "Compose yourselves again."

With hue that gives no token of deeds done :
And I will wear a trouble-clouded eye,
As who of deeds accomplished knoweth nought. 1320
Enter Hermioné.

Maiden, from wreathing Klytemnestra's grave,
From pouring offerings to the dead, art come ?

HERMIONE.

I come, her favour won. But on mine ears
Hath smitten strange dismay touching a cry
Heard from the house when I was yet afar. 1325

ELECTRA.

Why not ?—to us things worthy groans befall.

HERMIONE.

Ah, say not so ! What ill news tellest thou ?

ELECTRA.

Argos decrees Orestes' death and mine.

HERMIONE.

Ah never !—you who are by blood my kin !

ELECTRA.

'Tis fixed : beneath the yoke of doom we stand. 1330

HERMIONE.

For this cause was the cry beneath the roof ?

ELECTRA.

The suppliant crying fell at Helen's knees,—

HERMIONE.

Who?—nought the more I know, except thou tell.

ELECTRA.

Orestes, pleading for his life, and mine.

HERMIONE.

With reason then the dwelling rings with cries. 1335

ELECTRA.

For what cause rather should one lift his voice?

But come thou, and in suppliance join thy friends,

Falling before thy mother, the all-blest,

That Menelaus may not see us die.

O thou that in my mother's arms wast nursed, 1340

Have pity on us, of our woes relieve!

Come hither, meet the peril: I will lead.

With thee alone our safety's issue lies.

HERMIONE.

Behold, into the house I speed my feet.

So far as in me lies, ye are saved.

[*Enters the palace.*]

ELECTRA.

Ho ye, 1345

Armed friends within, will ye not seize the prey?

HERMIONE (*within*).

Alas for me! Whom see I?

ORESTES (*within*).

Hold thy peace.

Thou com'st for our deliverance, not for thine.

ELECTRA.

Hold ye her—hold ! Set to her throat the sword,
 And silent wait, till Menelaus learn 1350
 That men, not Phrygian cowards, hath he found,
 And fares now as 'tis meet that cowards fare. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

What ho ! friends, ho ! awake
 A din by the halls, let your clamour outbreak,
 That the blood that therein hath been shed
 Thrill not the souls of the people of Argos with dread,
 And unto the mansion of kings to the rescue they haste,
 Ere I look on the carcase of Helen beyond doubt cast
 Blood-besprent mid the palace-hall,
 Or hear the tale by the mouth of a thrall ;
 For I know of the havoc in part, but I know not all.
 By the hand of Justice the vengeance-doom [1360
 Of the Gods upon Helen's head hath come ;
 For she filled with tears all Hellas-land
 For the sake of Paris, the traitor banned,
 Who drew the array of Hellas away unto Ilium's strand.

But lo, the bars clash of the royal halls !
 Hush ye ;—there comes forth of her Phrygians one
 Of whom we shall learn what befell within.

Enter Phrygian.

PHRYGIAN.

From the death by the Argive swords have I fled !
 In my shoon barbaric I sped ; 1370
 O'er the colonnade's rafters of cedar I clomb ;
 'Twixt the Dorian triglyphs I slid ; and I come,

Fleeing like panic-struck Asian array—
 O earth, O earth!—away and away.
 Ah me, strange dames, whitherward can I flee,
 Through the cloud-dappled welkin my flight up-
 winging,
 Or over the sea
 Which the hornèd Ocean with arms enringing
 Coileth around earth endlessly?

CHORUS.

What is it, Helen's servant, Ida's son? 1380

PHRYGIAN.

Ilion, Ilion, woe is me!
 Phrygian city, and mount Idæan
 Holy and fertile, I wail for thee
 In the chariot-pæan, the chariot-pæan,¹
 With cry barbaric!—thy ruin came
 Of the bird-born beauty, the swan-plumed dame,
 Curst Helen the lovely, Leda's child,
 A vengeance-fiend to the towers upplied
 By Apollo of carven stone.
 Alas for thy moan, thy moan, 1390
 Dardania!—the steeds that Zeus gave erst
 For his minion Ganymede, made thee accurst!

CHORUS.

Tell clearly all that in the house befell:
 For thy first words be vague: I can but guess.

¹ The precise significance of this is mere matter of conjecture.

PHRYGIAN.

The Linus-lay—O the Linus-lay !—
 Death's prelude chanted, well-a-day,
 Of barbarian folk in their Asian tongue
 When the blood of their kings is poured on the earth,
 when the iron sword

Clangs Hades' song !

There came—that I tell thee the whole tale through—
 Into the halls Greek lions two : [1400

This was the son of the chieftain of Hellas' might ;

That, Strophius' scion, an evil-devising wight,

An Odysseus, silent and subtle of mood,

Staunch to his friends, and valiant in fight,

Cunning in war, a dragon of blood.

Ruin seize him, the felon knave,

For his crafty plotting still as the grave !

So came they in, and beside the throne

Of the lady whom Archer Paris won,

With eyes tear-streaming all humbly sat, 1410

On this side one, and the one on that,

Yet with guards beset on the left and the right.¹

Then, bending low to Helen, these

Cast suppliant hands about her knees.

But her Phrygian servants in panic affright

Upstarted, upstarted ;

And this unto that cried fearful-hearted,

“ Ha, treachery—beware ! ”

Yet no peril did some trace there : 1420

But to some did it seem that a snare

¹ *i.e.* Hemmed in on both sides by the attendant eunuchs. (Paley.) Other interpretations are, “ Weapon-girt to defend them to left and to right,” or, “ Hemming her in on the left and the right.”

Of guile was coiled round Tyndareus' child
By the serpent with blood of a mother defiled.

CHORUS.

Where then wast thou?—long since in terror fled?

PHRYGIAN.

In the Phrygian fashion, it chanced, was I swaying
Beside Queen Helen the rounded fan :
On the cheeks of Helen its plumes were playing,
Through the tresses of Helen the breeze was straying,
As I chanted a strain barbarian. 1430

And the flax from her distaff twining
Her fingers wrought evermore,
And ever her threads trailed down to the floor :
For her mind was to broider the purple-shining
Vesture of Phrygian spoils with her thread,
For a gift unto Klytemnestra the dead.

Then Orestes unto the daughter
Of Sparta spake, and besought her :
“O child of Zeus, arise from thy seat,
And hitherward set on the floor thy feet, 1440
To the ancient hearthstone-altar pace
Of Pelops, our father of olden days,
To hearken my words in the holy place.”

On, on he led her, and followed she
With no foreboding of things to be.
But his brother-plotter betook him the while
Unto other deeds, that Phocian vile,—
“Hence!—dastards ever the Phrygians were.”
Here, there, he bolted them, penned in the halls :
Some prisoned he in the chariot-stalls,
In the closets some, some here, some there, 1450

Sundered and severed afar from the queen in the snare.

CHORUS.

Now what disaster after this befell ?

PHRYGIAN.

O Mother Idæan, Mother sublime !
What desperate, desperate deeds, alas,
Of murderous outrage, of lawless crime,
Were they which I saw in the king's halls brought to
pass !
From under the gloom of their mantles of purple they
drew
Swords in their hands, and to this side and that side
threw

A swift glance, heeding that none stood nigh :
Then as boars of the mountains before my lady up-
towering high, 1460

They shout, " Thou shalt die, thou shalt die !

Thee doth thy craven husband slay,

The traitor that would unto death betray

In Argos his brother's son this day ! "

Then wild she shrieked, she shrieked, ah me !

Her white arm on her bosom beat,

Her head she smote in misery.

With golden-sandalled hurrying feet

She turned to flee, to flee !

But his clutch on her tresses Orestes laid,

For her sandals Mycenian his stride outwent.

On her leftward shoulder he bent [1470

Backward her neck, with intent

To plunge in her throat the sword's dark blade.

CHORUS.

What did those Phrygians in the house to help ?

PHRYGIAN.

Shouting, with battering bars asunder we rent
Doorpost and door of the chambers wherein we were
pent ;

And from this side and that of the halls to the rescue
we run,

One bearing stones, and a javelin one ;

In the hand of another a drawn sword shone :—

But onward to meet us pressed

Pylades' dauntless breast,

Like Hector the Phrygian, or Aias of triple crest, 1480

Whom I saw, I saw, when through portals of Priam he
flashed ;

And point to point in the grapple we clashed.

Then was it plain to discern how far

Worser than Hellenes in prowess of war

We Phrygians are.

In flight one vanished, and dead one lay,

This reeled sore wounded, that fell to pray

For life—his one shield prayer !

We fled, we fled through the darkness away,

While some were falling, and staggering some, some
lay still there. [1490

Then hapless Hermionê came to the halls, to the earth

As fell for her death the wretched mother who gave
her birth.

But as Bacchanals dropping the thyrsus to seize
A kidling over the hills that flees,

They rushed on her—grasped—turned back to
the slaughter

Of Helen—but vanished was Zeus's daughter !

From the bowers, through the house, gone
wholly from sight !

O Zeus, O Earth, O Sun, O Night !
 Whether by charms or by wizardry,
 Or stolen by Gods—not there was she !
 What chanced thereafter I know not, I ;
 For with stealthy feet from the halls did I fly.
 Ah, with manifold travail and weary pain 1500
 Menelaus hath won from Troy again
 Helen his bride—in vain !

CHORUS.

But unto strange things, lo, strange things succeed ;
 For sword in hand before the halls I see
 Orestes come with passion-fevered feet. 1505

Enter Orestes.

ORESTES.

Where is he that fleeing from the palace hath escaped
 my sword ?

PHRYGIAN.

Crouching to thee in barbaric wise I grovel, O my lord !

ORESTES.

Out ! No Ilium this is, but the land of Argos spreads
 hereby.

PHRYGIAN.

Everywhere shall wise men better love to cling to life
 than die.

ORESTES.

Didst thou not to Menelaus shout the rescue-cry but
 now ? 1510

PHRYGIAN.

Nay, O nay!—but for thine helping cried I :—worthier
art thou.

ORESTES.

Answer—did the child of Tyndareus by righteous sen-
tence fall ?

PHRYGIAN.

Righteous—wholly righteous—though she had three
throats to die withal.

ORESTES.

Dastard, 'tis thy tongue but truckles : in thine heart
thou think'st not so.

PHRYGIAN.

Should she not, who Hellas laid, and Phrygia's folk,
in ruin low ?

1515

ORESTES.

Swear—or I will slay thee,—that thou speakest not to
pleasure me.

PHRYGIAN.

By my life I swear—an oath I sure should honour
sacredly.

ORESTES.

Like to thee at Troy did steel fill all the Trojan folk
with fear ?

PHRYGIAN.

Take, take hence thy sword ! It glareth ghastly mur-
der, held so near !

ORESTES.

Fear'st thou lest thou turn to stone, as who hath seen
the Gorgon nigh ? 1520

PHRYGIAN.

Nay, but rather to a corpse : of head of Gorgon nought
know I.

ORESTES.

Thou a slave, and fearest Death, who shall from misery
set thee free !

PHRYGIAN.

Every man, though ne'er so much a thrall, yet joys the
light to see.

ORESTES.

Well thou say'st : thy wit hath saved thee. Hence
within the house—away !

PHRYGIAN.

Then thou wilt not slay me ?

ORESTES.

Pardoned art thou. 1525

PHRYGIAN.

Kindly dost thou say.

ORESTES.

Varlet, mine intent may change !—

PHRYGIAN.

Thou utterest now an evil note !

[*Exit.*

ORESTES.

Fool! to think that I would brook with blood to stain
 me from thy throat,
 Who art neither woman, neither found the ranks of
 men among!
 Forth the palace I but came to curb the clamour of
 thy tongue,
 For that swiftly roused is Argos if the rescue-cry she
 hear. 1530
 Menelaus—set him once at sword-length—nothing do
 I fear.
 Hence with him,¹ with golden locks whose pride about
 his shoulders falls!
 For, if he shall gather Argives, lead them on against
 these halls,
 Claiming blood-revenge for Helen, nor from death will
 set me free,—
 Yea, and Pylades my kinsman, who in all things
 wrought with me,— 1535
 Corpses twain, his maiden daughter and his wife, his
 eyes shall see. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

(Ant. to 1353—1365)

Ho, fortune, ho!—again, again,
 The house into terrible conflict-strain
 Breaks forth for the Atreïds' sake!
 What shall we do?—to the city the tidings take?
 Or keep we silence? Safer were this, O friends. 1540
 Lo there, lo there, where the smoke upleaping sends
 Its token afront of the halls through air!
 They will fire the palace of Tantalus!—glare

¹ Or "Let him come."

Already the brands, nor the deeds of murder they spare.
 Yet God overruleth the issue still,
 To mete unto men what issue he will :
 Great is his power ! By a curse-fiend led
 This house on a track of blood hath been sped
 Since Myrtilus, dashed from the chariot, plashed in the
 sea-surge, dead.

Ha, I see unto the palace Menelaus draweth near
 Hasty-footed, having heard the deeds but now accom-
 plished here. 1550
 Ye within the mansion—Atreus' children!—bar the
 bolted gate !—
 Haste ! oh haste ! A formidable foeman is the fortunate
 Unto such as be—as thou, Orestes, now—in evil strait.

*Enter Menelaus, below ; Orestes and Pylades above,
 with Hermione.*

MENELAUS.

I come at news of strange and violent deeds
 Wrought by two tigers, men I call them not. 1555
 In sooth I heard a rumour that my wife
 Is slain not, but hath vanished from the earth :
 An idle tale I count it, brought by one
 Distraught with fear. Nay, some device is this
 Of yonder matricide—a thing to mock ! 1560
 Open the door !—within there !—serving-men !
 Thrust wide the gates, that I may save at least
 My child from hands of blood-polluted men,
 And take mine hapless miserable wife,
 Even mine helpmeet, whose destroyers now 1565
 Shall surely perish with her by mine hand.

ORESTES (*above*).

Ho there !—lay not thine hand unto these bolts,
Thou Menelaus, tower of impudence ;
Else with this coping will I crush thine head,
Rending the ancient parapet's masonry. 1570
Fast be the doors with bars, to shut out thence
Thy rescuing haste, that thou force not the house.

MENELAUS.

Ha, what is this ?—torches agleam I see,
And on the house-roof yonder men at bay—
My daughter guarded—at her throat a sword ! 1575

ORESTES.

Wouldest thou question, or give ear to me ?

MENELAUS.

Neither : yet needs must I, meseems, hear thee.

ORESTES.

I am bent to slay thy child—if thou wouldst know.

MENELAUS.

How ? Helen slain, wouldst thou add blood to blood ?

ORESTES.

Would I had done that, ere Gods baffled me ! 1580

MENELAUS.

Thou slew'st her !—and for insult dost deny !

ORESTES.

Bitter denial 'tis to me : would God—

MENELAUS.

Thou hadst done—what ? Thou thrillst me with fear !

ORESTES.

I had hurled the curse of Hellas down to hell !

MENELAUS.

Yield up my wife's corpse : let me bury her ! 1585

ORESTES.

Ask of the Gods. But I will slay thy child.

MENELAUS.

He would add blood to blood—this matricide !

ORESTES.

His father's champion, death-betrayed by thee !

MENELAUS.

Sufficed thee not thy stain of mother's blood ?

ORESTES.

Ne'er should I weary of slaying wicked wives ! 1590

MENELAUS.

Shar'st thou too in this murder, Pylades ?

ORESTES.

His silence saith it : let my word suffice.

MENELAUS.

Nay, thou shalt rue, except thou flee on wings.

ORESTES.

Flee will we not, but we will fire the halls.

MENELAUS.

How, this thy fathers' home wilt thou destroy ? 1595

ORESTES.

Lest thou seize this—yea, slay her o'er its flames.

MENELAUS.

Slay on,—and taste my vengeance for her death !

ORESTES.

So be it (*raises sword*).

MENELAUS.

Ah ! in no wise do the deed !

ORESTES.

Peace—and endure ill-fortune, thy just due.

MENELAUS.

How—just that thou shouldst live ? 1600

ORESTES.

Yea—rule withal.

MENELAUS.

What land ?

ORESTES.

Pelasgian Argos, even this.

MENELAUS.

Thou touch the sacred lavers !—¹

ORESTES.

Wherefore not ?

MENELAUS.

And slay ere battle victims !—

ORESTES.

Well mayst *thou* !

MENELAUS.

Yea, for mine hands are clean.

ORESTES.

But not thine heart !

MENELAUS.

Who would speak to thee ?

1605

ORESTES.

Whoso loveth father.

MENELAUS.

And honoureth mother ?

ORESTES.

Happy he who may !

MENELAUS.

Not such art thou !

¹ The king, as commander-in-chief, sacrificed for the army before battle.

ORESTES.

Vile women please me not.

MENELAUS.

Take from my child thy sword !

ORESTES.

Born liar—no !¹

MENELAUS.

Wilt slay my child ?

ORESTES.

Ay—now thou liest not.

MENELAUS.

What shall I do ?

1610

ORESTES.

To the Argives go ; persuade—

MENELAUS.

What suasion ?

ORESTES.

Of the city beg our lives.

MENELAUS.

Else will ye slay my daughter ?

ORESTES.

Even so.

¹ The scholiast interprets, "Thou art deceived," *i.e.* in expecting me to spare her.

MENELAUS.

O hapless Helen!—

ORESTES.

And not hapless I?

MENELAUS.

From Troy to death I brought thee—¹

ORESTES.

Would 'twere so!

MENELAUS.

From toils untold endured!

1615

ORESTES.

Yet none for me.

MENELAUS.

I am foully wronged!

ORESTES.

No help was in thee then.²

MENELAUS.

Thou hast trapped me!

ORESTES.

Villain, thou hast trapped thyself!

What ho! Electra, fire the halls below!

¹ Or, reading σοῖ, "Murder from Troy I brought thee!"

² When you stood aloof in my hour of need (1058-9).

And thou, O truest of my friends to me,
 Pylades, kindle yonder parapets. 1620

MENELAUS.

O land of Danaans, folk of knightly Argos,
 Up, gird on harness !—unto rescue run !
 For lo, this man defieth all your state,
 Yet lives,¹ polluted with a mother's blood.

Apollo appears above in the clouds with Helen.

APOLLO.

Menelaus, peace to thine infuriate mood : 1625
 I Phœbus, Leto's son, here call on thee.
 Peace thou, Orestes, too, whose sword doth guard
 Yon maid, that thou mayst hear the words I bear.
 Helen, whose death thou hast essayed, to sting
 The heart of Menelaus, yet hast missed, 1630
 Is here,—whom wrapped in folds of air ye see,—
 From death delivered, and not slain of thee.
 'Twas I that rescued her, and from thy sword
 Snatched her away by Father Zeus' behest ;
 For, as Zeus' daughter, deathless must she live, 1635
 And shall by Kastor and Polydeukes sit
 In folds of air, the mariners' saviour she.
 Take thee a new bride to thine halls, and wed ;
 Seeing the high Gods by her beauty's lure
 Hellenes and Phrygians into conflict drew, 1640
 And brought to pass deaths, so to lighten earth
 Oppressed with over-increase of her sons.

¹ Reading with Nauck ζῆν δ', for ζῆν, explained by the scholiast to mean "in order to live."

Thus far for Helen : 'tis thy doom to pass,
 Orestes, o'er the borders of this land,
 And dwell a year's round on Parrhasian soil, 1645
 Which lips Azanian and Arcadian
 Shall from thine exile call " Orestes' Land."
 Thence shalt thou fare to the Athenians' burg,
 And stand thy trial for thy mother's blood
 Against the Avengers Three. The Gods shall there
 Sit judges, and on Arês' Holy Hill [1650
 Pass righteous sentence : thou shalt win thy cause.
 Hermionê, at whose throat is thy sword,
 Orestes, is thy destined bride : who thinks
 To wed her, shall not—Neoptolemus ; 1655
 For doomed is he to die by Delphian swords,
 When for his sire he claims redress of me.
 On Pylades thy sister's plighted hand
 Bestow : a life of bliss awaiteth him.
 Menelaus, leave Orestes Argos' throne. 1660
 Go, hold the sceptre of the Spartan land,
 As thy wife's dower, since she laid on thee
 Travail untold to this day evermore.
 I will to Argos reconcile this man
 Whom I constrained to shed his mother's blood. 1665

ORESTES.

Hail, Prophet Loxias, to thine oracles !
 No lying prophet wert thou then, but true.
 And yet a fear crept o'er me, lest I heard,
 Seeming to hear thy voice, a Fury-fiend.
 Yet well ends all : thy words will I obey. 1670
 Lo, from the sword Hermionê I release,
 And pledge me, when her sire bestows, to wed.

MENELAUS.

Hail, Helen, Child of Zeus ! I count thee blest,
 Thou dweller in the happy home of Gods.
 Orestes, I betroth to thee my child 1675
 At Phœbus' hest. Fair fall thy bridal, prince
 To princess wed : be I, her giver, blest !

APOLLO.

Depart now, each as I appoint to you,
 And your feuds reconcile.

MENELAUS.

Obey we must.

ORESTES.

I am like-minded. Truce with woes I make, 1680
 Menelaus, and thine oracles, Loxias.¹

APOLLO.

Pass on your way : and to Peace, of the Gods most
 fair,

Render ye praise.

Helen will I unto Zeus's mansion bear,
 Soon as I win to the height of the firmament, where
 Flash the star-rays.
 Throned beside Hêra, and Hêbê, and Herakles, there
 Aye shall she be
 With drink-offerings honoured by men, with the Tyn-
 darid pair,

¹ *i.e.* I am reconciled to my sufferings, and to thine oracle,
 which prompted the matricide from which they sprang.

Scions of Zeus, by mariners honoured with prayer,
 Queen of the Sea. 1690

CHORUS.

Hail, reverèd Victory :
 Rest upon my life, and me
 Crown, and crown eternally !

[*Exeunt omnes.*

IPHIGENEIA IN TAURICA.

ARGUMENT.

WHEN *Iphigeneia*, daughter of *Agamemnon*, lay on the altar of sacrifice at *Aulis*, *Artemis* snatched her away, and bare her to the *Tauric land*, which lieth in *Thrace* to north of the *Black Sea*. Here she was made priestess of the Goddess's temple, and in this office was constrained to consecrate men for death upon the altar ; for what Greeks soever came to that coast were seized and sacrificed to *Artemis*.

And herein is told how her own brother *Orestes* came thither, and by what means they were made known to each other, and of the plot that they framed for their escape.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IPHIGENEIA, *daughter of Agamemnon, and priestess of Artemis.*

ORESTES, *brother of Iphigeneia.*

PYLADES, *friend of Orestes.*

HERDMAN, *a Thracian.*

THOAS, *king of Thrace.*

MESSENGER, *servant of Thoas.*

ATHENA.

CHORUS, *consisting of captive Greek maidens attendants of Iphigeneia.*

SCENE :—In front of the temple of Artemis in Taurica.*

* The modern Crimea.

IPHIGENEIA IN TAURICA.

Enter from temple Iphigeneia.

IPHIGENEIA.

PELOPS, the son of Tantalus, with fleet steeds
To Pisa came, and won Oenomaus' child :
Atreus she bare ; of him Menelaus sprang
And Agamemnon, born of whom was I,
Iphigeneia, Tyndareus' daughter's babe. 5
Me, by the eddies that with ceaseless gusts
Euripus shifteth, rolling his dark surge,
My sire slew—as he thinks—for Helen's sake
To Artemis, in Aulis' clefts renowned.
For king Agamemnon drew together there 10
The Hellenic armament, a thousand ships,
Fain that Achaia should from Ilium win
Fair victory's crown, and Helen's outraged bed
Avenge—all this for Menelaus' sake.
But, in that dead calm and despair of winds,¹ 15
To altar-flames he turned, and Kalchas spake :
“Thou captain of this battle-host of Greece,
Agamemnon, thou shalt sail not from the land

¹ Or, reading *πνευμάτων τε*, “But, wearying mid dead calm and fitful gust,” or, “But when, for adverse blasts, no ship might sail.” (England).

Ere Artemis receive thy daughter slain,
 Iphigeneia : for, of one year's fruit, 20
 Thou vowedst the fairest to the Queen of Light.
 Lo, thy wife Klytemnestra in thine halls
 Bare thee a child "—so naming me most fair,—
 " Whom thou must offer." By Odysseus' wiles¹
 From her they drew me, as to wed Achilles. 25
 I came to Aulis : o'er the pyre,—ah me !—
 High raised was I, the sword in act to slay,—
 When Artemis stole me, for the Achaians set²
 There in my place a hind, and through clear air
 Wafted me, in this Taurian land to dwell, 30
 Where a barbarian rules barbarians,
 Thoas, who, since his feet be swift as wings
 Of birds, hath of his fleetness won his name.
 And in this fane her priestess made she me :
 Wherefore the Goddess Artemis hath joy 35
 In festal rites, whose name alone is fair ;³
 The rest—for dread of her I hold my peace.
 I sacrifice—'twas this land's ancient wont—
 What Greek soever cometh to this shore.
 Mine are the first rites ;⁴ in the Goddess' shrines 40
 The unspeakable slaughter is for others' hands.
 Now the strange visions that the night hath brought

¹ So MSS. *Al. τέχνη* " And Odysseus' wiles From her side drew me."

² So MSS. Nauck reads *Ἀχαιοὺς*, " from the Achaians' hands, Set in my place, etc."

³ The name, " Tauropolia," would not lead strangers to suspect that it differed from the festivals of Artemis with which they were familiar in Greece.

⁴ She sprinkled the victim with holy water, then cut a lock of hair from his forehead and cast it on the fire.

To heaven I tell—if aught of cure be there.¹
 In sleep methought I had escaped this land,
 And dwelt in Argos. Midst my maiden train 45
 I slept : then with an earthquake shook the ground.
 I fled, I stood without, the cornice saw
 Of the roof falling,—then, all crashing down,
 Turret and basement, hurled was the house to earth.
 One only column, as meseemed, was left 50
 Of my sires' halls ; this from its capital
 Streamed golden hair, and spake with human voice.
 Then I, my wonted stranger-slaughtering rite
 Observing, sprinkled it, as doomed to death,
 Weeping. Now thus I read this dream of mine : 55
 Dead is Orestes—him I sacrificed ;
 Seeing the pillars of a house be sons,
 And they die upon whom my sprinklings fall.
 None other friend can I match with my dream ;
 For on my death-day Strophius had no son. 60
 Now then will I, here, pour drink-offerings
 Unto my brother there,—'tis all I can,—
 I with mine handmaids, given me of the king,
 Greek damsels. But for some cause are they here
 Not yet : within the portals will I pass 65
 Of this, the Goddess' shrine, wherein I dwell.

[*Re-enters temple.*]

Enter Orestes and Pylades.

ORESTES.

Look thou—take heed that none be in the path.

¹ Referring to the custom of averting the evil of bad dreams by telling them to the morning sun, which was regarded as dispelling the dark influences of night.

PYLADES.

I look, I watch, all ways I turn mine eyes.

ORESTES.

Pylades, deem'st thou this the Goddess' fane
Whither from Argos we steered oversea ?

70

PYLADES.

I deem it is, Orestes, as must thou.

ORESTES.

And the altar, overdripped with Hellene blood ?

PYLADES.

Blood-russet are its rims in any wise.

ORESTES.

And 'neath them seest thou hung the spoils arow ?

PYLADES.

Yea, trophies of the strangers who have died.
But needs must we glance round with heedful eyes.

75

ORESTES.

Phœbus, why is thy word again my snare,
When I have slain my mother, and avenged
My sire ? From tired Fiends Fiends take up the chase,
And exiled drive me, outcast from my land, 80
In many a wild race doubling to and fro.
To thee I came and asked how might I win
My whirling madness' goal, my troubles' end,

Wherein I travailed, roving Hellas through.
 Thou bad'st me go unto the Taurian coasts 85
 Where Artemis thy sister hath her altars,
 And take the Goddess' image, which, men say,
 Here fell into this temple out of heaven,
 And, winning it by craft or happy chance,
 All danger braved, to the Athenians' land 90
 To give it—nought beyond was bidden me ;—
 This done, should I have respite from my toils.
 I come, thy words obeying, hitherward
 To a strange land and cheerless. Thee I ask,
 Pylades, thee mine helper in this toil,— 95
 What shall we do? Thou seest the engirdling walls,
 How high they be. Up yonder temple-steps¹
 Shall we ascend? How then could we learn more,²
 Except our levers force the brazen bolts
 Whereof we know nought? If we be surprised 100
 Opening gates, and plotting entrance here,
 Die shall we. Nay, ere dying, let us flee
 Back to the ship wherein we hither sailed.

PYLADES.

Flee?—'twere intolerable!—'twas ne'er our wont :
 Nor cravens may we be to the oracle. 105
 Withdraw we from the temple ; let us hide
 In caves by the dark sea-wash oversprayed,
 Far from our ship, lest some one spy her hull,

¹ A much-disputed passage, both as to text and interpretation. The above follows Paley. England's reading gives,

“ By ladder-escalade
 Shall we ascend? But how then let us down,
 Or force with levers the brass-welded bolts,
 And enter so? But if, etc.”

² MS. reading, *λάθοιμεν*, “ How then be unperceived.”

And tell the chiefs, and we be seized by force.
 But when the eye of murky night is come, 110
 That carven image must we dare to take
 Out of the shrine with all the craft we may.
 Mark thou betwixt the triglyphs a void space
 Whereby to climb down. Brave men on all toils
 Adventure ; nought are cowards anywhere. 115
 Have we come with the oar a weary way,
 And from the goal shall we turn back again ?

ORESTES.

Good : I must heed thee. Best withdraw ourselves
 Unto a place where we shall lurk unseen.
 For, if his oracle fall unto the ground, 120
 The God's fault shall it not be. We must dare,
 Since for young men toil knoweth no excuse.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Chorus and Iphigeneia.

CHORUS.

Keep reverent silence, ye
 Beside the Euxine Sea
 Who dwell, anigh the clashing rock-towers twain.
 Maid of the mountain-wild,
 Dictynna, Leto's child,
 Unto thy court, thy lovely-pillared fane,
 Whose roofs with red gold burn,
 Pure maiden feet I turn, 130
 Who serve the hallowed Bearer of the Key,
 Banished from Hellas' towers,
 From trees and meadow-flowers
 That fringe Eurotas by mine home o'ersea.

I come. Thy tidings?—what
Thy care? Why hast thou brought
Me to the shrines, O child of him who led
That fleet, the thousand-keeled,
That host of myriad shield 140
That Troyward with the glorious Atreïds sped?

IPHIGENEIA.

Ah maidens, sunken deep
In mourning's dole I weep :
My wails no measure keep
With aught glad-ringing
From harps : nor Song-queens' strain
Breathes o'er the sad refrain
Of my bereavement's pain,
Nepenthe-bringing.
The curse upon mine head
Is come—a brother dead ! 150
Ah vision-dream that fled
To Night's hand clinging !
Undone am I—undone !
My race—its course is run :
My sire's house—there is none :
Woe, Argos' nation !
Ah, cruel Fate, that tore
From me my love, and bore
To Hades! Dear, I pour
Thy death-libation— 160
Fountains of mountain-kine,
The brown bees' toil, the wine,
Shed on earth's breast, are thine,
Thy peace-oblation !

Give me the urn, whose gold
 The Death-god's draught shall hold :—
 Thee, whom earth's arms enfold,
 Atreides' scion,
 These things I give thee now ;
 Dear dead, accept them thou.
 Bright tresses from my brow
 Shall never lie on
 Thy grave, nor tears. Our land—
 Thine—mine—to me is banned.
 Far off the altars stand
 Men saw me die on.

170

CHORUS.

Lo, I will peal on high
 To echo thine, O queen,
 My dirge, the Asian hymn, and that weird cry,
 The wild barbaric keen,
 The litany of death,
 Song-tribute that we bring
 To perished ones, where moaneth Hades' breath,
 Where no glad pæans ring.

180

IPHIGENEIA.

Woe for the kingly sway
 From Atreus' house that falls !
 Passed is their sceptre's glory, passed away—
 Woe for my fathers' halls !
 Where are the heaven-blest kings
 Throned erstwhile in their might
 O'er Argos ? Trouble out of trouble springs
 In ceaseless arrowy flight.

190

CHORUS.

O day when from his place
 The Sun his winged steeds wheeled,
 Turning the splendour of his holy face
 From horrors there revealed !
 That golden lamb[†] hath brought
 Woe added unto woe,
 Pang upon pang, murder on murder wrought :
 All these thy line must know.
 Vengeance thine house must feel
 For sons thereof long dead : 200
 Their sins Fate, zealous with an evil zeal,
 Visiteth on thine head.

IPHIGENEIA.

From the beginning was to me accurst
 My mother's spousal-fate :
 The Queens of Birth with hardship from the first
 Crushed down my childhood-state.
 I, the first blossom of the bridal-bower
 Of Leda's hapless daughter 210
 By princes wooed, was nursed for that dark hour
 Of sacrificial slaughter,
 For vows that stained with sin my father's hands
 When I was chariot-borne
 Unto the Nereid's son on Aulis' sands—
 Ah me, a bride forlorn !
 Lone by a stern sea's desert shores I live
 Loveless, no children clinging
 To me—the homeless, friendless, cannot give 220
 To Hera praise of singing

[†] See note to *Electra*, l. 699.

In Argos ; nor to music of my loom
 Shall Pallas' image grow
 Splendid in strife Titanic :¹—in my doom
 Blood-streams mid groanings flow,
 The ghastly music made of strangers laid
 On altars, piteous-weeping !
 Yet from these horrors now my thoughts have strayed,
 Afar to Argos leaping 230
 To wail Orestes dead—a kingdom's heir !
 Ah, hands of my lost mother
 At my departing clasped, her bosom bare
 The babe-face of my brother !

CHORUS.

Lo, yonder from the sea-shore one hath come,
 A herdman bearing tidings unto thee.

Enter Herdman.

HERDMAN.

Agamemnon's daughter, Klytemnestra's child,
 Hear the strange story that I bring to thee !

IPHIGENEIA.

What cause is in thy tale for this amaze ?² 240

HERDMAN.

Unto the land, through those blue Clashing Rocks
 Sped by the oar-blades, two young men be come,
 A welcome offering and sacrifice

¹ See *Hecuba*, ll. 466—474, and note.

² Others interpret, " Now what is this that on our counsel breaks ? "

To Artemis. Prepare thee with all speed
The lustral streams, the consecrating rites. 245

IPHIGENEIA.

Whence come?—what land's name do the strangers
bear?¹

HERDMAN.

Hellenes: this one thing know I; nought beside.

IPHIGENEIA.

Nor heardest thou their name, to tell it me?

HERDMAN.

Pylades one was of his fellow named.

IPHIGENEIA.

And of the stranger's comrade what the name? 250

HERDMAN.

This no man knoweth, for we heard it not.

IPHIGENEIA.

Where saw ye—came upon them—captured them?

HERDMAN.

Upon the breakers' verge of yon drear sea.

IPHIGENEIA.

Now what have herdmen with the sea to do?

¹ Or, if we read *σχημα*, "Whence?—of what land bear they the outward show?"

HERDMAN.

We went to wash our cattle in sea-brine. 255

IPHIGENEIA.

To this return—where laid ye hold on them,
And in what manner? This I fain would learn.
For late they come: the Goddess' altar long
Hath been with streams of Hellene blood undyed.

HERDMAN.

Even as we drave our woodland-pasturing kine 260
Down to the sea that parts the Clashing Rocks,—
There was a cliff-chine, by the ceaseless dash
Of waves grooved out, a purple-fishers' haunt;—
Even there a herdman of our company
Beheld two youths, and backward turned again, 265
With tiptoe stealth his footsteps piloting,
And spake, "Do ye not see them?—yonder sit
Gods!" One of us, a god-revering man,
Lifted his hands, and looked on them, and prayed:
"Guardian of ships, Sea-queen Leukothea's son, 270
O Lord Palaimon, gracious be to us,—
Whether the Great Twin Brethren yonder sit,
Or Nereus' darlings, born of him of whom
That company of fifty Nereids sprang."
But one, a scorner, bold in lawlessness, 275
Mocked at his prayers: for shipwrecked mariners
Dreading our law, said he, sat in the cleft,
Who had heard how strangers here be sacrificed.
And now the more part said, "He speaketh well:
Let us then hunt the Goddess' victims due." 280
One of the strangers left meantime the cave,

Stood forth, and up and down he swayed his head,
 And groaned and groaned again with quivering hands,
 Frenzy-distraught, and shouted hunter-like :
 " Pylades, seest thou her ?—dost mark not her, 285
 Yon Hades-dragon, lusting for my death,
 Her hideous vipers gaping upon me ?
 And yon third, breathing fire and slaughter forth,
 Flaps wings—my mother in her arms she holds—
 Ha, now to a rock-mass changed !—to hurl her down !
 Ah ! she will slay me ! Whither can I fly ? " [290
 We could not see these shapes : his fancy changed
 Lowing of kine and barking of the dogs
 To howlings which the Fiends sent forth, he said.¹
 We, cowering low, as men that looked to die, 295
 Sat hushed. With sudden hand he drew his sword,
 And like a lion rushed amidst the kine,
 Smote with the steel their flanks, pierced through their
 ribs,—
 Deeming that thus he beat the Erinnyes back,—
 So that the sea-brine blossomed with blood-foam. 300
 Thereat each man, soon as he marked the herds
 Harried and falling slain, 'gan arm himself,
 Blowing on conchs and gathering dwellers-round ;
 For we accounted herdmen all too weak

¹ Both text and sense of 288—294 are much disputed.
 The following rendering is based on other readings and interpretations :

" And this, whose robes waft fire and slaughter forth,
 Flaps towards yon craggy height her wings :—she holds
 My mother in her arms, to hurl her down !
 Ah ! she will slay me !—whither can I fly ? "
 Yet ever his fancy changed, for now he feigned
 Lowing of kine and barking as of dogs—
 Such howlings as the Fiends send forth, men say.

To fight with strangers young and lusty-grown. 305
So in short time were many mustered there.
Now ceased the stranger's madness-fit : he falls,
Foam spraying o'er his beard. We, marking him
So timely fallen, wrought each man his part,
Hurling with battering stones. His fellow still 310
Wiped off the foam, and tended still his frame,
And screened it with his cloak's fair-woven folds,
Watching against the ever-hailing blows,
With loving service ministering to his friend.
He came to himself—he leapt from where he lay— 315
He marked the surge of foes that rolled on him,
And marked the ruin imminent on them,
And groaned : but we ceased not from hurling stones,
Hard pressing them from this side and from that.
Thereat we heard this terrible onset-shout : 320
“ Pylades, we shall die : see to it we die
With honour ! Draw thy sword, and follow me.”
But when we saw our two foes' brandished blades,
In flight we filled the copses of the cliffs.
Yet, if these fled, would those press on again, 325
And cast at them ; and if they drave those back,
They that first yielded hurled again the stones.
Yet past belief it was—of all those hands,
To smite the Goddess' victims none prevailed.
At last we overbore them,—not by courage, 330
But, compassing them, smote the swords unwares
Out of their hands with stones. To earth they bowed
Their toil-spent knees. We brought them to the king :
He looked on them, and sent them with all speed
To thee, for sprinkling waters and blood-bowls. 335
Pray, maiden, that such strangers aye be given
For victims. If thou still destroy such men,

Hellas shall make atonement for thy death,
Yea, shall requite thy blood in Aulis spilt.

CHORUS.

Strange tale thou tellest of the man new come, 340
Whoe'er from Hellas yon drear sea hath reached.

IPHIGENEIA.

Enough : go thou, the strangers hither bring :
I will take thought for all that needeth here.

[*Exit Herdman.*]

O hardened heart, to strangers in time past
Gentle wast thou and ever pitiful, 345
To kinship meting out its due of tears,
When Greeks soever fell into thine hands.

But now, from dreams whereby mine heart is steeled,—
Who deem Orestes seëth light no more,—
Stern shall ye find me, who ye be soe'er. 350

Ah, friends, true saw was this, I prove it now :—

*The hapless, which have known fair fortune once,
Are bitter-thoughted unto happier folk.*

Ah, never yet a breeze from Zeus hath come,
Nor ship, that through the Clashing Rocks hath brought
Hitherward Helen, her which ruined me, [355

And Menelaus, that I might requite
An Aulis here on them for that afar,

Where, like a calf, the sons of Danaus seized
And would have slain me—mine own sire the priest !
Ah me ! that hour's woe cannot I forget— [360

How oft unto my father's beard I strained
Mine hands, and clung unto my father's knees,
Crying,—" O father, in a shameful bridal
I am joined of thee ! My mother, in this hour 365

When thou art slaying me, with Argive dames
 Chanteth my marriage-hymn : through all the house
 Flutes ring !—and I am dying by thine hand !
 Hades the Achilles was, no Peleus' son,
 Thou profferedst me for spouse : thou broughtest me
 By guile with chariot-pomp to bloody spousals." [370
 But I—the fine-spun veil fell o'er mine eyes,
 That I took not my brother in mine arms,
 Who now is dead, nor kissed my sister's lips
 For shame, as unto halls of Peleus bound. 375
 Yea, many a loving greeting I deferred,
 As who should come to Argos yet again.
 Hapless Orestes !—from what goodly lot
 By death thou art banished, what high heritage !
 Out on this Goddess's false subtleties, 380
 Who, if one stain his hands with blood of men,
 Or touch a wife new-travailed, or a corpse,
 Bars him her altars, holding him defiled,
 Yet joys herself in human sacrifice !
 It cannot be that Zeus' bride Leto bare 385
 Such folly. Nay, I hold unworthy credence
 The banquet given of Tantalus to the Gods,—
 As though the Gods could savour a child's flesh !
 Even so, this folk, themselves man-murderers,
 Charge on their Goddess their own sin, I ween ; 390
 For I believe that none of Gods is vile.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

(*Str. 1*)

Dark cliffs, dark cliffs of the Twin Seas' meeting,
 Where the gadfly of Io, from Argos fleeing,
 Passed o'er the heave of the havenless surge
 From the Asian land unto Europe's verge,

Who are these, that from waters lovely-gleaming
 By Eurotas' reeds, or from fountains streaming 400
 Of Dirکہ the hallowed have come, have come,
 To the shore where the stranger may find no home,
 Where with crimson from human veins that raineth
 The Daughter of Zeus her altars staineth¹
 And her pillared dome ?

(Ant. 1)

Or with pine-oars rightward and leftward flinging
 The surf, and the breeze in the tackle singing
 Of the sea-wain, over the surge did they sweep,
 Sore-coveted wealth in their halls to heap ?— [410
 For winsome is hope unto men's undoing,
 And unsatisfied ever they be with pursuing
 The treasure up-piled for the which they roam
 Unto alien cities o'er ridges of foam,
 By a day-dream beguiled :—and one ne'er taketh
 Fortune at flood, while her full tide breaketh
 Unsought over some. 420

(Str. 2)

How 'twixt the Death-crags' swing,
 And by Phineus' beaches that ring
 With voices of seas unsleeping,
 Won they, by breakers leaping
 O'er the Sea-queen's strand; as they passed
 Through the crash of the surge flying fast,
 And saw where in dance-rings sweeping
 The fifty Nereids sing,—
 When strained in the breeze the sail, 430
 When hissed, as the keel ran free,

¹ Or, reading *κούρα*,

“Where raineth the crimson of human slaughter
 On the altars of Zeus's Virgin Daughter.”

The rudder astern, and before the gale
 Of the south did the good ship flee,
 Or by breath of the west was fanned
 Past that bird-haunted strand,
 The long white reach of Achilles' Beach,
 Where his ghost-feet skim the sand
 By the cheerless sea ?

(Ant. 2)

But O had Helen but strayed
 Hither from Troy, as prayed 440
 My lady,—that Leda's daughter,
 Her darling, with spray of the water
 Of death on her head as a wreath,
 Were but laid with her throat beneath
 The hand of my mistress for slaughter !
 Fit penalty so should be paid.
 How gladly the word would I hail,
 If there came from the Hellene shore,
 One hitherward wafted by wing of the sail,
 Who should bid that my bondage be o'er, 450
 My bondage of travail and pain !
 O but in dreams yet again
 Mid the homes to stand of my fatherland,
 In the bliss of a rapturous strain
 My soul to outpour !

Enter attendants with Orestes and Pylades.

Lo, hither with pinioned arms come twain,
 Victims fresh for the Goddess's fane :—
 Friends, hold ye your peace.
 No lying message the herdman spoke : 460
 To the temple be coming the pride of the folk
 Of the land of Greece !

Dread Goddess, if well-pleasing unto thee

Are this land's deeds, accept the sacrifice
Her laws give openly, although it be
Accurst in Hellene eyes.

Enter Iphigeneia.

IPHIGENEIA.

First, that the Goddess' rites be duly done
Must I take heed. Unbind the strangers' hands,
That, being hallowed, they be chained no more ;
Then, pass within the temple, and prepare 470
What needs for present use, what custom bids.

Sighs. [Exeunt attendants.

Who was your mother, she which gave you birth ?—
Your sire ?—your sister who ?—if such there be,
Of what fair brethren shall she be bereaved, [475
Brotherless now ! Who knoweth upon whom
Such fates shall fall ? Heaven's dealings follow ways
Past finding out, and none foreseeeth ill.

Fate draws us ever on to the unknown !

Whence, O whence come ye, strangers evil-starred ?
O'er what long paths to this land have ye sailed ? 480
Long, long from home shall ye in Hades be.

ORESTES.

Why make this moan, and with the ills to come
Afflict us, woman, whosoe'er thou art ?
Not wise I count him, who, when doomed to death,
By lamentation would its terrors quell, 485
Nor him who wails for Hades looming nigh,
Hopeless of help. He maketh evils twain
Of one : he stands of foolishness convict,
And dies no less. E'en let fate take her course.
For us make thou no moan : the altar-rites 490
Which this land useth have we learnt, and know.

IPHIGENEIA.

Whether of you twain here was called by name
Pylades?—this thing first I fain would learn.

ORESTES.

He—if to learn this pleasure thee at all.

IPHIGENEIA.

And of what Hellene state born citizen? 495

ORESTES.

How should the knowledge, lady, advantage thee?

IPHIGENEIA.

Say, of one mother be ye brethren twain?

ORESTES.

In love we are brethren, lady, not in birth.

IPHIGENEIA.

And what name gave thy father unto thee?

ORESTES.

Rightly might I be called “Unfortunate.” 500

IPHIGENEIA.

Not this I ask: lay this to fortune’s door.¹

¹ *i.e.* What I would know is the name for which your father, not fortune, is responsible.

ORESTES.

If I die nameless, I shall not be mocked.¹

IPHIGENEIA.

Now wherefore grudge me this? So proud art thou?

ORESTES.

My body shalt thou slaughter, not my name.

IPHIGENEIA.

Not even thy city wilt thou name to me? 505

ORESTES.

Thou seekest to no profit: I must die.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yet, as a grace to me, why grant not this?

ORESTES.

Argos² the glorious boast I for my land.

IPHIGENEIA.

'Fore Heaven, stranger, art indeed her son?

ORESTES.

Yea—of Mycenæ, prosperous in time past. 510

¹ The bitterest drop in the death-cup to a Greek was the derision of foes (cf. *Medea* 1362, *Herakles* 286). If these did not even know his name, half the sting was taken away: it was like killing a man in a mask. They reached the body only, not the man.

² Argos is here the district (Argolis): the *town* was about six miles from Orestes' native Mycenæ.

IPHIGENEIA.

Exiled didst quit thy land, or by what hap?

ORESTES.

In a sort exiled—willing, and yet loth.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yet long-desired from Argos hast thou come.

ORESTES.

Of me, not : if of thee, see thou to that.¹

IPHIGENEIA.

Now wouldst thou tell a thing I fain would know? 515

ORESTES.

Ay—a straw added to my trouble's weight.

IPHIGENEIA.

Troy haply know'st thou, famed the wide world through?

ORESTES.

Would I did not,—not even seen in dreams!

IPHIGENEIA.

They say she is no more, by spears o'erthrown.

ORESTES.

So is it : things not unfulfilled ye heard.

520

IPHIGENEIA.

Came Helen back to Menelaus' home?

¹ Or, reading τοῦδ' ἔρα, "joy thou in that."

ORESTES.

She came—for evil unto kin of mine.

IPHIGENEIA.

Where is she? Evil debt she oweth me.

ORESTES.

In Sparta dwelling with her sometime lord.

IPHIGENEIA.

Thing loathed of Hellenes, not of me alone! 525

ORESTES.

I too have tasted of her bridal's fruit.

IPHIGENEIA.

And came the Achaïans home, as rumour saith?

ORESTES.

Thou in one question comprehendest all.

IPHIGENEIA.

Ah, ere thou die, this boon I fain would win.

ORESTES.

Ask on, since this thou cravest. I will speak. 530

IPHIGENEIA.

Kalchas, a prophet—came he back from Troy?

ORESTES.

Dead—as the rumour in Mycenæ ran.

IPHIGENEIA (*turning to Artemis' temple*).

O Queen, how justly ! And Laertes' son ?

ORESTES.

He hath won not home, but liveth, rumour tells.

IPHIGENEIA.

Now ruin seize him ! Never win he home ! 535

ORESTES.

No need to curse. His lot is misery all.

IPHIGENEIA.

Liveth the son of Nereid*Thetis yet ?

ORESTES.

Lives not. In Aulis vain his bridal was.

IPHIGENEIA.

A treacherous bridal !—they which suffered know.

ORESTES. [540

Who art thou—thou apt questioner touching Greece ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Thence am I, in my childhood lost to her.

ORESTES.

Well mayst thou, lady, long for word of her.

IPHIGENEIA.

What of her war-chief, named the prosperous ?

ORESTES.

Who? Of the prosperous is not he I know.

IPHIGENEIA.

One King Agamemnon, Atreus' scion named. 545

ORESTES.

I know not. Lady, let his story be.

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, tell, by Heaven, that I be gladdened, friend.

ORESTES.

Dead, hapless king!—and perished not alone.

IPHIGENEIA.

Dead is he? By what fate?—ah, woe is me!

ORESTES.

Why dost thou sigh thus? Is he kin to thee? 550

IPHIGENEIA.

His happiness of old days I bemoan.

ORESTES.

Yea, and his awful death—slain by his wife!

IPHIGENEIA.

O all-bewailed, the murderess and the dead!

ORESTES.

Refrain thee even now, and ask no more.

IPHIGENEIA.

This only—lives the hapless hero's wife? 555

ORESTES.

Lives not. Her son—ay,¹ whom herself bare—slew
her.

IPHIGENEIA.

O house distraught! Slew her!—with what intent?

ORESTES.

To avenge on her his murdered father's blood.

IPHIGENEIA.

Alas!—ill justice, wrought how righteously!

ORESTES.

Not blest of Heaven is he, how just soe'er.² 560

IPHIGENEIA.

Left the king other issue in his halls?

ORESTES.

One maiden child, Electra, hath he left.

IPHIGENEIA.

How, is nought said of her they sacrificed?

¹ The Greek οὗτος conveys the same covert hint of the identity of the speaker with the person spoken of, which is conveyed to an English ear by the identity in sound of *ay* and *I*: Hence we may have here an instance of that "Tragic Irony" so much appreciated by Athenian audiences.

² Or, "Yet doth Heaven's blessing match not his deserts."

ORESTES.

Nought—save, being dead, she seeth not the light.

IPHIGENEIA.

Ah, hapless she, and hapless sire that slew ! 565

ORESTES.

Slain for an evil woman—graceless grace !

IPHIGENEIA.

And lives the dead king's son in Argos yet ?

ORESTES.

He lives, unhappy, nowhere, everywhere.

IPHIGENEIA.

False dreams, avaunt ! So then ye were but nought.

ORESTES.

Ay, and not even Gods, whom men call wise, 570
Are less deceitful than be fleeting dreams.

Utter confusion is in things divine,
As in things human. This worst grief remains,
When, not of folly, but through words of seers,
Comes ruin—how deep, they that prove it know. 575

CHORUS.

Alas, alas ! Of me—*my* parents—what ?
Live they, or live they not ? Ah, who can tell ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Hearken, for I have found us a device,

Strangers, shall do you service, and withal
 To me ; and thus is fair speed best attained, 580
 If the same end be pleasing unto all.
 Wouldst thou, if I would save thee, take for me
 To Argos tidings to my kindred there,
 And bear a letter, which a captive wrote
 Of pity for me, counting not mine hand 585
 His murderer, but that he died by law
 Of this land, since the Goddess holds it just ?
 For I had none from Argos come, to go
 Back, saved alive, to Argos, and to bear
 My letter to a certain friend of mine. 590
 But thou, if thou art nobly-born, as seems,
 And know'st Mycenæ, and the folk I mean,
 Receive thy life : accept no base reward,
 Deliverance, for a little letter's sake.
 But this man, since the state constraineth so, 595
 Torn from thee, be the Goddess' sacrifice.

ORESTES.

Well say'st thou, save for one thing, stranger maid :—
 That he be slain were heavy on my soul.
 I was his pilot to calamity,
 He sails with me for mine affliction's sake. 600
 Unjust it were that I, in pleasuring thee,
 Should seal his doom, and 'scape myself from ills.
 Nay, be it thus,—the letter give to him
 To bear to Argos ; so art thou content :
 But me let who will slay. Most base it is 605
 That one should in misfortune whelm his friends,
 Himself escaping. This man is my friend,
 Whose life I tender even as mine own.

IPHIGENEIA.

O noble spirit ! from what princely stock
Hast thou sprung, thou so loyal to thy friends ! 610
Even such be he that of my father's house
Is left alive ! For, stranger, brotherless
I too am not, save that I see him not.
Since thou wilt have it so, him will I send
Bearing the letter : thou wilt die. Ah, deep 615
This thy strange yearning unto death must be !

ORESTES.

Whose shall be that dread deed, my sacrifice ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Mine ; for this office hold I of the Goddess.

ORESTES.

A task, O maid, unenviable, unblest.

IPHIGENEIA.

Bowed 'neath necessity, I must submit. 620

ORESTES.

A woman, with the priest's knife slay'st thou men ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, on thine hair I shed but lustral spray.

ORESTES.

The slayer, who ?—if I may ask thee this.

IPHIGENEIA.

Within the fane be men whose part is this.

ORESTES.

And what tomb shall receive me, being dead ? 625

IPHIGENEIA.

A wide rock-rift within, and holy fire.

ORESTES.

Would that a sister's hand might lay me out !

IPHIGENEIA.

Vain prayer, unhappy, whosoe'er thou be,
 Thou prayest. Far she dwells from this wild land.
 Yet, forasmuch as thou an Argive art, 630
 Of all I can, no service will I spare.
 Much ornament will I lay on thy grave :
 With golden oil thine ashes will I quench ;
 The tawny hill-bee's amber-lucent dew,
 That well from flowers, I'll shed upon thy pyre. 635
 I go, the letter from the Goddess' shrine
 To bring. Ah, think not bitterly of me !¹
 Ward them, ye guards, but with no manacles.
 Perchance to a friend in Argos shall I send
 Tidings unhop'd—the friend whom most I love :— 640
 The letter, telling that she lives whom dead
 He deems, shall seal the happy tidings' faith.²

[Exit.

¹ Or, " Ah, hold not this ill deed for mine ! " (Jerram.)

² Or, reading λέγονσ' ἀπίστους, " Shall bear glad tidings past belief."

CHORUS.

*To Orestes.**(Str.)*

I wail for thee, for whom there wait
 The drops barbaric, on thy brow
 To fall, to doom thee to be slain.

ORESTES.

This asks not pity. Stranger maids, farewell.¹

CHORUS.

*To Pylades.**(Ant.)*

Thee count I blessèd for thy fate,
 Thine happy fate, fair youth, that thou
 Shalt tread thy native shore again.

PYLADES.

Small cause to envy friends, when die their friends. 650

CHORUS.

Ah, cruel journeying for thee !

Woe ! thou art ruined utterly !

Alas ! woe worth the day !

Whether of you is deeper whelmed in woe ?²

For yet my soul in doubt sways to and fro—

Thee shall I chiefly wail, or thee ? How shall I say ?

ORESTES.

'Fore heaven, Pylades, is thy thought mine ?—

PYLADES.

I know not : this thy question baffles me.

¹ Or, "rejoice." (Jerram).

² Reading μέλεος μάλλον ὦν.

ORESTES.

Who is the maiden? With how Greek a heart 660
 She asked us of the toils in Ilium,
 The host's home-coming, Kalchas the wise seer
 Of birds, Achilles' name! How pitied she
 Agamemnon's wretched fate, and questioned me
 Touching his wife, his children! Sure, her birth 665
 Is thence, of Argos; else she ne'er would send
 A letter thither, nor would question thus,
 As one whose welfare hung on Argos' weal.

PYLADES.

Mine own thought but a little thou forestallest,
 Save this—that the calamities of kings 670
 All know, who have had converse with the world.
 But my mind runneth on another theme.¹

ORESTES.

What? Share it, and thou better shalt conclude.

PYLADES.

'Twere base that I live on, when thou art dead:
 With thee I voyaged, and with thee should die. 675
 A coward's and a knave's name shall I earn
 In Argos and in Phocis' thousand glens.
 Most men will think—seeing most men be knaves—
 That I forsook thee, escaping home alone,—
 Yea, slew thee, mid the afflictions of thine house 680
 Devising, for thy throne's sake, doom for thee,
 As being to thine heiress sister wed.

¹ Or (δι᾽ ἄλλου), "But of another matter, too, she spake."

For these things, then, I take both shame and fear :
It cannot be but I must die with thee,
With thee be slaughtered and with thee be burned, 685
Seeing I am thy friend, and dread reproach.

ORESTES.

Ah, speak not so ! My burden must I bear ;
Nor, when but one grief needs, will I bear twain.
For that reproach and grief which thou dost name
Is mine, if thee, the sharer of my toil, 690
I slay. For my lot is not evil all,—
Being thus tormented by the Gods,—to die.
But thou art prosperous : taintless are thine halls,
Unstricken ; mine accurst and fortune-crost.
If thou be saved, and get thee sons of her, 695
My sister, whom I gave thee to thy wife,
Then should my name live, nor my father's house
Ever, for lack of heirs, be blotted out.
Pass hence, and live : dwell in my father's halls.
And when to Greece and Argos' war-steed land 700
Thou com'st,—by this right hand do I charge thee—
Heap me a tomb : memorials lay of me
There ; tears and shorn hair let my sister give.
And tell how by an Argive woman's hand
I died, by altar death-dews consecrate. 705
Never forsake my sister, though thou see
Thy marriage-kin, my sire's house, desolate.
Farewell. Of friends I have found thee kindest,
O fellow-hunter, foster-brother mine,
Bearer of many a burden of mine ills ! 710
Me Phœbus, prophet though he be, deceived,
And by a cunning shift from Argos drave
Afar, for shame of those his prophecies.

I gave up all to him, obeyed his words,
My mother slew—and perish now myself! 715

PYLADES.

Thine shall a tomb be : ne'er will I betray
Thy sister's bed, O hapless : I shall still
Hold thee a dearer friend in death than life.
Yet thee hath the God's oracle not yet
Destroyed, albeit thou standest hard by death. 720
Nay, misery's blackest night may chance, may chance,
By fortune's turn, to unfold a sudden dawn.

ORESTES.

Peace ! Phœbus' words avail me nothing now ;
For yonder forth the temple comes the maid.

Enter Iphigeneia.

IPHIGENEIA (*to guards*).

Depart ye, and within make ready all 725
For them whose office is the sacrifice. [*Exeunt guards*].
Strangers, my letter's many-leavèd folds
Are here : but that which therebeside I wish
Hear :—in affliction is no man the same
As when he hath passed from fear to confidence. 730
I dread lest, having gotten from this land,
He who to Argos should my tablet bear
Shall set my letter utterly at nought.

ORESTES.

What wouldst thou then ? Why thus disquieted ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Let him make oath to bear to Argos this 735
To them to whom I fain would send my script.

ORESTES.

Wilt thou in turn give him the selfsame pledge ?

IPHIGENEIA.

To do what thing, or leave undone ? Say on.

ORESTES.

To send him forth this barbarous land unslain ?

IPHIGENEIA.

A fair claim thine ! How should he bear it else ? 740

ORESTES.

But will the king withal consent hereto ?

IPHIGENEIA.

I will persuade him, yea, embark thy friend.

ORESTES (*to Pylades*).

Swear thou :—and thou a sacred oath dictate.

IPHIGENEIA.

Say thou wilt give this tablet to my friends.

PYLADES.

I to thy friends will render up this script. 745

IPHIGENEIA.

And through the Dark Rocks will I send thee safe.

PYLADES.

What Gods dost take to witness this thine oath ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Artemis, in whose fane I hold mine office.

PYLADES.

And I by Heaven's King, reverèd Zeus.

IPHIGENEIA.

What if thou fail thine oath, and do me wrong? 750

PYLADES.

May I return not. If *thou* save me not?—

IPHIGENEIA.

Alive in Argos may I ne'er set foot.

PYLADES.

Hear now a matter overlooked of us.

IPHIGENEIA.

Not yet is this too late, so it be fair.

PYLADES.

This clearance grant me—if the ship be wrecked, 755
And in the sea-surge with the lading sink
The letter, and my life alone I save,
That then of this mine oath shall I be clear.

IPHIGENEIA.

“*For many a chance have many a shift*”¹—hear mine:—
All that is written in the letter's folds 760

¹ A proverbial expression, like “’Tis well to have two strings to your bow.”

My tongue shall say, that thou mayst tell my friends.
 So is all safe : if thou lose not the script,
 Itself shall voiceless tell its written tale :
 But if this writing in the sea be lost,
 Then thy life saved shall save my words for me. 765

PYLADES.

Well hast thou said, both for thy need,¹ and me.
 Now say to whom this letter I must bear
 To Argos, and from thee what message speak.

IPHIGENEIA.

Say to Orestes, Agamemnon's son—
 “ *This Iphigeneia, slain in Aulis, sends,* 770
Who liveth, yet for those at home lives not—”

ORESTES.

Where is she ? Hath she risen from the dead ?

IPHIGENEIA.

She whom thou seest—confuse me not with speech :—
 “ *Bear me to Argos, brother, ere I die :*
From this wild land, these sacrifices, save, 775
Wherein mine office is to slay the stranger ;”—

ORESTES.

What shall I say ?—Now dream we, Pylades ?

IPHIGENEIA.

“ *Else to thine house will I become a curse,*
Orestes ”—so, twice heard, hold fast the name.

¹ Reading τῶν τε σῶν, for MS. τῶν θεῶν “for the Gods.”

ORESTES.

Gods !

IPHIGENEIA.

Why in *mine* affairs invoke the Gods ? 780

ORESTES.

'Tis nought : say on : my thoughts had wandered far.
(*Aside*) This marvel may I yet by question fathom.¹

IPHIGENEIA.

Say—" *Artemis in my place laid a hind,
And saved me,—this my father sacrificed,
Deeming he plunged the keen blade into me,—* 785
And made me dwell here." This the letter is,
And in the tablets this is what is writ.

PYLADES.

O thou who hast bound me by an easy oath—
Hast fairly sworn !—I will not tarry long
To ratify the oath that I have sworn. 790
This tablet, lo, to thee I bear, and give,
Orestes, from thy sister, yonder maid.

ORESTES.

This I receive :—I let its folds abide—
First will I seize a rapture not in words :—
Dear sister mine, albeit wonder-struck, 795
With scarce-believing arm I fold thee round,
And taste delight, who hear things marvellous !
Embraces Iphigeneia.

¹ England, reading ἀφίξεται, gives this line to Iphigeneia :—
" If haply he shall doubt and question thee."

CHORUS.

Stranger, thou sinn'st, polluting Artemis' priestess,
Casting about her sacred robes thine arm !

ORESTES.

O sister mine, thou of one father sprung, 800
Agamemnon, turn not thou away from me,
Who hast thy brother, past expectancy !

IPHIGENEIA.

I ?—thee ?—my brother ?—wilt not hold thy peace ?
Argos and Nauplia know his presence now.¹

ORESTES.

Not there, unhappy one, thy brother is. 805

IPHIGENEIA.

Did Tyndareus' Spartan daughter bear thee then ?

ORESTES.

To Pelops' son's son, of whose loins I sprang.

IPHIGENEIA.

What say'st thou ?—hast thou proof hereof for me ?

ORESTES.

I have. Ask somewhat of our father's home.

IPHIGENEIA.

Now nay ; 'tis thou must speak, 'tis I must learn. 810

¹ England interprets, "Not least is he in Nauplia now and Argos."

ORESTES.

First will I name this—from Electra heard :—
Know'st thou of Atreus' and Thyestes' feud ?

IPHIGENEIA.

I heard, how of a golden lamb it came.

ORESTES.

This broidered in thy web rememberest thou ?—

IPHIGENEIA.

Dearest, thy course wheels very nigh my heart !¹ 815

ORESTES.

And, pictured in thy loom, the sun turned back ?

IPHIGENEIA.

This too I wrought with fine-spun broidery-threads.

ORESTES.

Bath-water sent to Aulis of thy mother ?²—

IPHIGENEIA.

I know—that bridal's bliss stole not remembrance.

ORESTES.

Again—thine hair unto thy mother sent ? 820

¹ As the chariot in the race wheels close round the post.

² Sent because ritual required the bride to bathe on her wedding-morning in water from the sacred spring of her native town.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, a grave-token in my body's stead.

ORESTES.

What myself saw, these will I name for proofs :
 In our sire's halls was Pelops' ancient spear,
 Swayed in his hands when Pisa's maid he won,
 Hippodameia, and slew Oenomaus : 825
 Hidden it was within thy maiden bower.

IPHIGENEIA.

Dearest !—nought else, for thou art passing dear !—
 Orestes, best-beloved, I clasp thee now,
 Far from thy fatherland, from Argos, here,
 O love, art thou ! 830

ORESTES.

And thee I clasp—the dead, as all men thought !
 Tears—that are no tears,—ecstasy blent with moan,¹
 Make happy mist in thine eyes as in mine.

IPHIGENEIA.

That day in the arms of thy nurse did I leave thee a
 babe, did I leave thee,
 A little one—ah, such a little one then in our palace
 wast thou !

¹ So of Odysseus' men when Circê has reversed the spell —
 “And a passion of tender sadness stole through the heart of
 their gladness ;
 Weird echoes of joy and grief round the walls of the palace
 were flung.”

Odyssey, x, 318—9.

See also *Helen*, 654.

O, a fortune too blissful for words doth receive thee,
my soul, doth receive thee!
What can I say?—for, transcending all marvels, of
speech they bereave me,
The things that have come on us now! 840

ORESTES.

Hereafter side by side may we be blest!

IPHIGENEIA.

O friends, I am thrilled with a strange delight:
Yet I fear lest out of mine arms to the height
Of the heaven he may wing his flight.
O hearths Cyclopiàn, O my fatherland
Mycenæ the dear,
For the gift of his life thanks, thanks for thy fostering
hand,
For that erst thou didst rear
My brother, a light of defence in our halls to stand.

ORESTES.

Touching our birth blest are we, but our life, 850
My sister, in its fortunes was unblest.

IPHIGENEIA.

I know it, alas! who remember the blade
To my throat by my wretched father laid—

ORESTES.

Woe's me! though far, I seem to see thee there!

IPHIGENEIA.

When by guile I was thitherward trained, the bride,
As they feigned, whom Achilles should wed!

But the marriage-chant rang not the altar beside,
But tears streamed, voices of wailing cried ; 860
Woe, woe for the lustral-drops there shed !

ORESTES.

I wail, I too, the deed my father dared.

IPHIGENEIA.

An unfatherly father by doom was allotted to me ;
Yet ills out of ills rise ceaselessly
By a God's decree !¹

ORESTES.

Ah, hadst thou slain thy brother, hapless one !

IPHIGENEIA.

Woe for my crime ! I took in hand a deed
Of horror, brother ! Scant escape was thine 870
From god-accursed destruction, even to bleed
By mine hand, mine !

Yea, now what end to all this doth remain ?
What shrouded fate shall yet encounter me ?
By what device from this land home again
Shall I speed thee

From slaughter, and to Argos bid depart,
Or ever with thy blood incarnadined 880
The sword be ? 'Tis thy task, O wretched heart,
The means to find.

¹ Following arrangement of lines adopted by England and Jerram.

What, without ship, far over land wouldst fly
 With feet swift-winged with terror and despair,
 Through wild tribes, pathless ways, aye drawing nigh
 Death ambushed there?

Nay, through the Dark-blue Rocks, the strait sea-
 portal,

Bearing thee must a bark her long course run. 890
 O hapless, hapless I! What God or mortal,
 O hapless one,

Or what strange help transcending expectation
 Shall to us twain, of Atreus' seed the last,
 Bring fair deliverance, bring from ills salvation,—
 From ills o'erpast!

CHORUS.

Marvel of marvels, passing fabled lore, 900
 Myself have seen, none telleth me the tale.

PYLADES.

Orestes, well may friends which meet the gaze
 Of friends, enfold them in the clasp of love.
 Yet must we cease from moan, and look to this,
 In what wise winning glorious safety's name 905
 Forth from the land barbaric we may fare.
 For wise men take occasion by the hand,
 And let not fortune slip for pleasure's lure.

ORESTES.

Well say'st thou: yet will fortune work, I trow,
 Herein with us. But toil of strenuous hands 910
 Still doubles the Gods' power to render aid.

IPHIGENEIA.

Thou shalt not stay me, neither turn aside
From asking of Electra first—her lot
In life : all touching her is dear to me.

ORESTES.

Wedded to this man (*pointing to Pyl.*) happy life she
hath. 915

IPHIGENEIA.

And he—what land is his ?—his father, who ?

ORESTES.

Strophius the Phocian is his father's name.

IPHIGENEIA.

Ha ! Atreus' daughter's son, of kin to me ?

ORESTES.

Thy cousin is he, and my one true friend.

IPHIGENEIA.

He was unborn when my sire sought my death. 920

ORESTES.

Unborn ; for long time childless Strophius was.

IPHIGENEIA.

O husband of my sister, hail to thee !

ORESTES.

Yea, and my saviour, not my kin alone.

IPHIGENEIA.

How couldst thou dare that dread deed on our mother ?

ORESTES.

Speak we not of it !—to avenge my sire. 925

IPHIGENEIA.

And what the cause for which she slew her lord ?

ORESTES.

Let be my mother : 'twould pollute thine ears.

IPHIGENEIA.

I am silent. Looketh Argos now to thee ?

ORESTES.

Menelaus rules : I am exiled from the land.

IPHIGENEIA.

Our uncle—*he* insult our stricken house ! 930

ORESTES.

Nay, but the Erinnyes' terror drives me forth.

IPHIGENEIA.

Thence told they of thy frenzy on yon shore.

ORESTES.

Not now first was my misery made a show.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, for thy mother's sake fiends haunted thee—

ORESTES.

To thrust a bloody bridle in my mouth. 935

IPHIGENEIA.

Wherefore to this land didst thou steer thy foot ?

ORESTES.

Bidden of Phoëbus' oracle I came.

IPHIGENEIA.

With what intent ? May this be told or no ?

ORESTES.

Nay, I will tell it, source of many a woe.¹
 When to mine hands' avenging fell the sin 940
 I name not, of my mother, chasing fiends
 Drave me to exile, until Loxias
 Guided my feet to Athens at the last,
 To make atonement to the Nameless Ones.
 For there is a tribunal, erst ordained 945
 Of Zeus, to cleanse the War-god's blood-stained hands.²
 Thither I came : but no bond-friend at first
 Would welcome me, as one abhorred of heaven.
 They which took shame,³ at a several table gave

¹ Or, "I'll tell it : here begins a tale of woes."

² See *Electra*, 1258-63.

³ Or, "felt compassion." Divided between their shrinking from the murderer, and their fear of violating the laws of hospitality, they adopted the expedient of having a separate table for every guest, (thus making no invidious distinction), and, instead of the usual great mixing-bowl, from which wine-and-water was ladled into all the cups, a separate

The guest-fare, tarrying 'neath the selfsame roof; 950
 Yet from all converse by their silence banned me,
 So from their meat and drink to hold me apart;
 And, filling for each man a several pitcher,
 All equal, had their pleasure of the wine.
 I took not on me to arraign mine hosts; 955
 But, as who marked it not, in silence grieved;
 With bitter sighs the mother-slayer grieved.¹
 Now are my woes to Athens made, I hear,
 A festival, and yet the custom lives
 That Pallas' people keep the Pitcher-feast. 960
 And when to Ares' mount I came to face
 My trial, I upon this platform stood,
 And the Erinnyes' eldest upon that.
 Then, of my mother's blood arraigned, I spake;
 And Phœbus' witness saved me. Pallas told 965
 The votes: her arm swept half apart for me.
 So was I victor in the murder-trial.
 They² which consented to the judgment, chose
 Nigh the tribunal for themselves a shrine.
 But of the Erinnyes some consented not, 970
 And hounded me with homeless chasings aye,
 Until, to Phœbus' hallowed soil returned,
 Fasting before his shrine I cast me down,
 And swore to snap my life-thread, dying there,
 Except Apollo saved me, who destroyed. 975

pitcher for each. The festival, of which this was the
 mythical origin, was held at Athens in Anthesterion
 (February).

¹ Or,

"But silent grieved, as on whose conscience lay,
 For all my sighs, no stain of mother's blood."

(England).

² *i.e.* Those of the Erinnyes.

Then from the golden tripod Phœbus' voice
 Pealed, hither sending me to take the image
 Heaven-fall'n, and set it up in Attica.
 Now to this safety thus ordained of him
 Help thou : for, so the image be but won, 980
 My madness shall have end : thee will I speed
 Back to Mycenæ in a swift-oared ship.
 O well-belovèd one, O sister mine,
 Save thou our father's house, deliver me.
 For Pelops' line and I are all undone 985
 Except I win that image fall'n from heaven.

CHORUS.

Dread wrath of Gods hath burst upon the seed
 Of Tantalus, and on through travail drives.

IPHIGENEIA.

Earnest my longing, ere thou camest, was
 To be in Argos, brother, and see thee. 990
 Thy will is mine, to set thee free from woes,
 And to restore my father's stricken house,
 Nursing no wrath against my murderer.
 So of thy slaughter shall mine hands be clean,
 And I shall save our house. Yet how elude 995
 The Goddess ?—how the king, when he shall find
 Void of its statue that stone pedestal ?
 How shall I not die ? What should be my plea ?
 But if both ends in one may be achieved—
 If, with the statue, on thy fair-prowed ship 1000
 Thou bear me hence, the peril well is braved.
 If I attain not liberty, I die ;
 Yet still mayst thou speed well, and win safe home.

O then I flinch not, though my doom be death,
 So I save thee! A man that from a house 1005
 Dies, leaves a void : a woman matters not.

ORESTES.

My mother's slayer and thine I will not be !
 Suffice her blood. With heart at one with thine
 Fain would I live, and dying share thy death.
 Thee will I lead, except I perish here, 1010
 Homeward, or dying here abide with thee.
 Hear mine opinion—if this thing displease
 Artemis, how had Loxias bidden me
 To bear her statue unto Pallas' burg,¹
 And see thy face ? So, setting side by side 1015
 All these, I hope to win safe home-return.

IPHIGENEIA.

How may we both escape death, and withal
 Bear off that prize ? Imperilled most herein
 Our home-return is :—this must we debate.²

ORESTES.

Haply might we prevail to slay the king ? 1020

IPHIGENEIA.

Foul deed were this, that strangers slay their host.³

¹ There is probably a gap between this line and the next, the sense of which has been conjecturally supplied thus :—

“ And is not this an earnest that the Gods
 Are with us, that to this land I have won.”

² Reading βούλευσις for MS. βούλησις, “ our *will* lacketh not.”

³ Thoas was Iphigeneia's host : she means that she would be an accomplice in his murder.

ORESTES.

Yet must we venture—for thy life and mine.

IPHIGENEIA.

I could not. Yet thine eager heart I praise.

ORESTES.

How if thou privily hide me in yon fane?

IPHIGENEIA.

By favour of the dark to steal it thence? 1025

ORESTES.

Yea, night is leagued with theft : the light for truth.

IPHIGENEIA.

Within the fane be guards : no baffling them.

ORESTES.

Alas ! we are undone. How can we 'scape ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Methinks I have a yet untried device.

ORESTES. [1030

Ha, what ? Impart thy thought, that I may know.

IPHIGENEIA.

Thy misery will I turn to cunning use.

¹ ἔξω θείμεν. Others, ἐκσωθείμεν, “ By favour of the darkness to escape.”

ORESTES.

Women be shrewd to seek inventions out !

IPHIGENEIA.

A matricide from Argos will I name thee,—

ORESTES.

Use my misfortunes, if it serve thine end.

IPHIGENEIA.

Unmeet for sacrifice to Artemis,— 1035

ORESTES.

Pleading what cause ?—for somewhat I surmise.

IPHIGENEIA.

As one unclean. The pure alone I slay.

ORESTES.

Yet how the more hereby is the image won ?

IPHIGENEIA.

I'll say that I would cleanse thee in sea-springs ;—

ORESTES.

Still bides the statue there, for which we sailed. 1040

IPHIGENEIA.

That this too must I wash, as touched of thee.

ORESTES.

Where ?—in yon creek where rains the blown sea-spray ?¹

¹ An inlet of the sea came up close to the temple (see 1196) : this, suitable as it might appear to others, would, of course, not serve their purpose.

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, where thy ship rides moored with hempen reins.

ORESTES.

Will thine hands, or another's, bear the image?

IPHIGENEIA.

Mine. Sinlessly none toucheth it save me. 1045

ORESTES.

And in this blood-guilt what is Pylades' part?¹

IPHIGENEIA.

Stained even as thine his hands are, will I say.

ORESTES.

Hid from the king shall be thy deed, or known?

IPHIGENEIA.

I must persuade whom I could not elude.

ORESTES.

Ready in any wise the oared ship is. 1050

'Tis thine to see that all beside go well.

One thing we lack, that yon maids hide all this.

Beseech them thou, and find persuasive words;

A woman's tongue hath pity-stirring might:—

Then may all else perchance have happy end. 1055

¹ (MS. reading), *i.e.* in this story of pollution by matricide. Others, reading *χόρον*, render, "And in this play what part hath Pylades?"

IPHIGENEIA.

Damsels beloved, I raise mine eyes to you.
 Mine all is in your hands—for happiness,
 Or ruin, and for loss of fatherland,
 Of a dear brother, and a sister loved.
 Of mine appeal be this the starting-point— 1060
 Women are we, each other's staunchest friends,
 In keeping common counsel wholly loyal.
 Keep silence ; help us to achieve our flight.
 A loyal tongue is its possessor's crown.
 Ye see three friends upon one hazard cast, 1065
 Or to win back to fatherland or die.
 If I escape,—that thou mayst share my fortune,—
 Thee will I bring home. Oh, by thy right hand
 Thee I implore—and thee !—by thy sweet face
 Thee,—by thy knees—by all thou lov'st at home !¹ 1070
 What say ye ? Who consents ?—Who sayeth nay—
 Oh speak !—to this ?—for if ye hearken not,
 I and mine hapless brother are undone.

CHORUS.

Fear not, dear lady : do but save thyself. 1075
 I will keep silence touching all the things
 Whereof thou chargest me : great Zeus be witness.

IPHIGENEIA.

Heaven bless you for the word ! Happy be ye !
 (*To Or. and Pyl.*) 'Tis thy part now, and thine, to pass
 within ;

¹ Line 1071, "By mother, father, babes—if any hath babes," is omitted by most editors, as inconsistent with line 130 of this play.

For this land's king shall in short space be here 1080
To ask if yet this sacrifice be done.

O Goddess-queen, who erst by Aulis' clefts
Didst save me from my sire's dread murderous hand,
Save me now too with these; else Loxias' words
Through thee shall be no more believed of men. 1085
But graciously come forth this barbarous land
To Athens. It beseems thee not to dwell
Here, when so blest a city may be thine.

Iphigeneia, Orestes, and Pylades enter the temple.

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Thou bird, who by scaurs o'er the sea-breakers leaning
Ever chantest thy song, 1090

O Halcyon, thy burden of sorrow, whose meaning
To the wise doth belong,

Who discern that for aye on thy mate thou art crying,
I lift up a dirge to thy dirges replying—

Ah, thy pinions I have not!—for Hellas sighing,
For the blithe city-throng;

For that happier Artemis¹ sighing, who dwelleth
By the Cynthian Hill,

By the feathery palm, by the shoot that swelleth
When the bay-buds fill, 1100

By the pale-green sacred olive that aided
Leto, whose travail the dear boughs shaded,
By the lake with the circling ripples braided,

¹ Reading *δελβίαν* instead of the stock epithet *λοχίαν*, "For Travail-queen Artemis." The beauty that surrounds the temple (in Delos) of the beneficent Goddess worshipped in Greece is contrasted with the cheerless home of the sanguinary deity of the Taurians.

Where from throats of the swans to the Muses up-
welleth

Song-service still.

(*Ant.* 1)

O tears on my cheeks that as fountains plashing

Were rained that day,

When I sailed, from our towers that in ruin were
crashing,

In our galleys, the prey

Of the oars of the foe, of the spears that had caught
me, 1110

And for gold in the balances weighed men bought me,
And unto a barbarous home they brought me,

To the handmaid-array

Of Atreides' daughter, who sacrificeth

To the Huntress-queen

On the altars whence reek of the slain Greeks riseth !

Ah, the man that hath seen

Bliss never, full gladly his lot would I borrow !

For he faints not 'neath ills, who was cradled in sorrow ;

On his night of affliction may dawn bright morrow :¹

But whom ruin, in happiness ambushed, surpriseth,

Ah, their stroke smiteth keen !

(*Str.* 2)

And the fifty oars shall dip of the Argive gallant ship

That shall waft thee to the homeland shore ;

And the waxèd pipe shall ring of the mountain Shepherd-
king

To enkindle them that tug the strenuous oar ;

And the Seer shall wing their fleetness, even Phœbus,
by the sweetness

Of the seven-stringed lyre in his hand ;

¹ Retaining reading of MSS.

And his chanting voice shall lead you as in triumph-
march, and speed you 1130

Unto Athens, to the sunny-gleaming land.

And I shall be left here lone, but thou

Shalt be racing with plash of the pine,

While the broad sail swells o'er the plunging
prow

Outcurving the forestay-line,

While the halliards shiver, the mainsheets quiver,

As the cutwater leaps thro' the brine.

(*Ant.* 2)

And it's O that I could soar down the splendour-litten
floor

Where the sun drives the chariot-steeds of light,

And it's O that I were come o'er the chambers of my
home, 1140

And were folding the swift pinions of my flight ;

And that, where at royal wedding the bridemaids'
feet are treading

Through the measure, I were gliding in the dance,

Through its maze of circles sweeping with mine olden
playmates, keeping

Truest time with waving arms and feet that glance !

And it's O for the loving rivalry,

For the sweet forms costily-arrayed,

For the raiment of cunningest broidery,

For the challenge of maid to maid,

For the veil light-tossing, the loose curl crossing

My cheek with its flicker of shade ! [1150

Enter Thoas with attendants.

THOAS.

Where is this temple's warder, Hellas' daughter ?

Hath she begun yon strangers' sacrifice ?
Are they ablaze with fire in the holy shrine ? 1155

CHORUS.

Here is she, king, to tell thee clearly all.

*Enter Iphigeneia bearing the image of
Artemis in her arms.*

THOAS.

Why bear'st thou in thine arms, Agamemnon's child,
From its inviolate base the Goddess' statue ?

IPHIGENEIA.

King, stay thy foot there in the portico !

THOAS.

What marvel hath befallen in the fane ? 1160

IPHIGENEIA.

Avaunt, pollution, in religion's name !

THOAS.

What strange thing dost thou preface ? Plainly tell.

IPHIGENEIA.

Unclean I found thy captured victims, king.

THOAS.

What proof hast thou ?—or speak'st thou but thy
thought ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Back from its place the Goddess' statue turned. 1165

THOAS.

Self-moved ?—or did an earthquake wrench it round ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Self-moved. Yea, also did it close its eyes.

THOAS.

The cause ?—pollution by the strangers brought ?

IPHIGENEIA.

This, and nought else ; for foul deeds have they done.

THOAS.

Ha ! slaughter of my people on the shore ? 1170

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, stained with guilt of murdered kin they came.

THOAS.

What kin ? I am filled with longing this to learn.

IPHIGENEIA.

Their mother with confederate swords they slew.

THOAS.

Apollo ! Of barbarians none had dared it !

IPHIGENEIA.

Out of all Hellas hunted were they driven. 1175

THOAS.

And for their cause bear'st thou the image forth ?

IPHIGENEIA.

'Neath holy sky to banish that blood-taint.

THOAS.

The strangers' guilt—how knewest thou thereof?

IPHIGENEIA.

I questioned them, when back the Goddess turned.

THOAS.

Wise child of Hellas, well didst thou discern. 1180

IPHIGENEIA.

Even now they cast a bait to entice mine heart.

THOAS.

Tidings from Argos—made they this their lure?

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, of mine only brother Orestes' weal.

THOAS.

That thou might'st spare them for their welcome news?

IPHIGENEIA.

My father liveth and is well, say they. 1185

THOAS.

Thou to the Goddess' part in thee didst cleave?¹

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, for I hate all Greece, which gave me death.

¹ Or, "Thou, true to Artemis, didst reject the bait?"

THOAS.

What shall we do then with the strangers, say ?

IPHIGENEIA.

We must needs reverence the ordinance.

THOAS.

Why do not lustral drops and knife their part ? 1190

IPHIGENEIA.

With holy cleansings would I wash them first.

THOAS.

In fountain-waters, or in sea-spray showers ?

IPHIGENEIA.

The sea doth wash away all ills of men.

THOAS.

Thus holier should the Goddess' victims be.

IPHIGENEIA.

And better so should all my purpose speed. 1195

THOAS.

Full on the fane doth not the sea-surge break ?

IPHIGENEIA.

There needeth solitude : more is to do.

THOAS.

Where thou wilt. Into mystic rites I pry not.

IPHIGENEIA.

The image must I purify withal.

THOAS.

Yea, if the matricide hath tainted it.

1200

IPHIGENEIA.

Else from its pedestal had I moved it not.

THOAS.

Righteous thy piety and forethought are.

IPHIGENEIA.

Know'st thou now what still I lack?

THOAS.

'Tis thine to tell what yet must be.

IPHIGENEIA.

Bind with chains the strangers.

THOAS.

Whither from thy warding could they flee?

IPHIGENEIA.

Faithless utterly is Hellas.

1205

THOAS.

Henchmen mine, to bind them go.

IPHIGENEIA.

Let them now bring forth the strangers hitherward,—

THOAS.

It shall be so.

IPHIGENEIA.

Veiling first their heads with mantles.

THOAS.

Lest the sun pollution see.

IPHIGENEIA.

Send thou also of thy servants with me.

THOAS.

These shall go with thee.

IPHIGENEIA.

And throughout the city send thou one to warn—

THOAS.

'Gainst what mischance ?

IPHIGENEIA.

That within all folk abide ;—

1210

THOAS.

Lest any eye meet murder's glance.

IPHIGENEIA.

For the look shall bring pollution.

THOAS (*to attendant*).

Go thou, warn the folk of this.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, and chiefly of my friends—

THOAS.

Hereby thou meanest me, I wis.

IPHIGENEIA.

None must to the sight draw near.

THOAS.

Our city hath thine heedful care.

IPHIGENEIA.

Rightly.

THOAS.

Rightly through the city art thou revered
everywhere.

IPHIGENEIA.

Thou abide before Her shrine :

1215

THOAS.

What service shall I do her there ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Cleanse her house with flame.

THOAS.

That it be pure for thy return thereto.

IPHIGENEIA.

And when forth the temple come the strangers—

THOAS.

What behoves to do ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Draw thy mantle o'er thine eyes.

THOAS.

Lest I be tainted of their sin ?

IPHIGENEIA.

If o'erlong I seem to tarry,—

THOAS.

What the limit set herein ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Marvel not.

1220

THOAS.

In thine own season render thou the dues divine.

IPHIGENEIA.

Fair befall this purifying as I would !

THOAS.

Thy prayer is mine.

IPHIGENEIA.

Lo, and even now I see the strangers pacing forth the
fane,

With the adorning of the Goddess, with the lambs,—
that by blood-stain

Blood-stain I may cleanse,—with flash of torches, and
with what beside,

As I bade, the strangers and the Goddess shall be purified. 1225

Now I warn the city-folk to shrink from this pollution
far :—

Ye that, with pure hands for heaven's service, temple-
warders are,

Whoso purposeth espousals, whoso laboureth with child,
Flee ye ; hence away, that none with this pollution be
defiled.

Queen, O child of Zeus and Leto, so the guilt from
these I lave, 1230

So I sacrifice what meet is, stainless temple shalt thou
have ;

Blest withal shall we be—more I say not, yet to Gods
who know

All, and, Goddess, unto thee, mine heart's desire I
plainly show.

*[Thoas enters temple. Exeunt Iphigeneia,
Orestes, Pylades, and attendants.]*

CHORUS.¹

(Str.)

A glorious babe in the days of old

Leto in Delos bare,

Mid its valleys of fruitage manifold,

The babe of the golden hair,—

Lord of the harp sweet-ringing, king of the bow sure-
winging

¹ Apollo's oracle was now proved right, and Iphigeneia's dream (ll. 42—62) wrong ; hence an ode is appropriately introduced celebrating the institution of the God's oracle, and the abolition of the ancient dream-oracles.

The shaft that he loveth well,—and she fled from the
rock by the swell

Of the sea encompassed, bringing 1240

From the place where her travail befell

Her babe to the height whence rolled the gushing rills
untold,

Where the Wine-god's revels stormy-souled

O'er the crests of Parnassus fare ;

Where, gleaming with coils iridescent, half-hiding

The glint of his mail 'neath the dense-shadowed
bay,

Was the earth-spawned monster, the dragon, gliding

Round the chasm wherein earth's oracle lay.

But thou, who wast yet but a babe, yet leaping

Babe-like in thy mother's loving embrace, 1250

Thou, Phœbus, didst slay him, didst take for thine

The oracle's lordship, the right divine,

And still on the tripod of gold art keeping

Thy session, dispensing to us, to the race

Of men, revelation of heaven's design,

From thy throne of truth, from the secret shrine,

By the streams through Castaly's cleft up-sweeping,

Where the Heart of the World is thy dwelling-
place.

(*Ant.*)

But the Child of Earth did his coming make

Of her birthright dispossessed, 1260

For the oracle-sceptre of Themis he brake :

Wherefore the Earth from her breast,

To make of his pride a derision, sent forth dream-
vision on vision,

Whereby to the sons of men the things that had been
ere then,

And the things for the Gods' decision
 Yet waiting beyond our ken,
 Through the darkness of slumber¹ she spake, and from
 Phœbus—in fierce heart-ache
 Of jealous wrath for her daughter's sake—
 His honour so did she wrest.
 Swift hasted our King to Olympus' palace, 1270
 And with child-arms clinging to Zeus' throne prayed
 That the night-visions born of the Earth-mother's
 malice
 Might be banished the fane in the Pythian glade.
 Smiled Zeus, that his son, for the costly oblations
 Of his worshippers jealous, so swiftly had come :
 And he shook his locks for the great oath-plight,
 And he made an end of the voices of night ;
 For he took from mortals the visitations
 Of the night-dreams born of the Earth's dark womb ;
 And he sealed by an everlasting right 1280
 Loxias' honours, that all men might
 Trust wholly his word, when the thronging nations
 Bowed at the throne where he sang fate's doom.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

O temple-warders, altar-ministers,
 Whither hath Thoas gone, this country's king ? 1285
 Fling wide the closely-bolted doors, and call
 Forth of these halls the ruler of the land.

CHORUS.

What is it ?—if unbidden I may speak.

¹ Another reading, "To the earth-couched sleeper."

MESSENGER.

Gone are the two youths, vanished clean from sight,
Gone, by the plots of Agamemnon's child, 1290
Fleeing from this land, taking with them hence
The holy statue in a Greek ship's hold.

CHORUS.

Thy tale is past belief!—but the land's king,
Whom thou wouldst see, hath hurried forth the fane.

MESSENGER.

Whither?—for what is done he needs must know. 1295

CHORUS.

We know not: go thou, hasten after him,
And, where thou findest him, make thy report.

MESSENGER.

Lo now, how treacherous is womankind!
Ye also are partakers in this deed.

CHORUS.

Art mad? What is to us the strangers' flight? 1300
Away with all speed to thy master's gates.

MESSENGER.

Nay, not till I be certified of this,
Whether the land's lord be within or no.
What ho!—within there!—shoot the door-bolts back,
And to your master tell that at the gates 1305
Am I, who bear a burden of ill-news.

Enter Thoas from the temple.

THOAS.

Who makes this outcry at the Goddess' fane,
Smiting the doors, and hurling noise¹ within?

MESSENGER.

Falsely these said—would so have driven me hence—
That thou wast forth, while yet wast thou within. 1310

THOAS.

What profit sought they?—hunted for what gain?

MESSENGER.

Their deeds hereafter will I tell. Hear thou
The trouble at the doors. The maid that here
Served at the altars, Iphigeneia, is fled
With yonder strangers, and the holy image 1315
Hath taken. Nought but guile that cleansing was.

THOAS.

How say'st? What wind of fortune hath she found?

MESSENGER.

To save Orestes. Marvel thou at this!

THOAS.

Orestes?—him whom Tyndareus' daughter bare?

MESSENGER.

Him whom the Goddess hallowed for her altars. 1320

¹ One MS. has *φόβον*, "alarm."

THOAS.

O marvel ! What name stronger fitteth thee ?

MESSENGER.

Take thou not thought for that, but list to me :
Mark clearly all, and as thou hear'st devise
By what pursuit to hunt the strangers down.

THOAS.

Say on : thou speakest well. By no near course 1325
They needs must flee, that they should 'scape my spear.¹

MESSENGER.

Soon as unto the sea-beach we had come,
Where hidden was Orestes' galley moored,
Us, whom with those bound strangers thou didst send,
Agamemnon's child waved back, to stand aloof, 1330
As one at point to light the inviolate fire
And do the cleansing for the which she came.
Herself took in her hands the strangers' bonds,
And paced behind. Somewhat mine heart misgave,
Yet were thy servants satisfied, O King. 1335
Time passed : she chanted loud in alien hymns
Of wizardry,—with semblance of weird rites
To cozen us,—as one that cleansed blood-guilt.
But when we had been long time sitting thus,
It came into our minds that, breaking loose, 1340
The strangers might have slain her, and have fled.²
Yet, dreading to behold forfended things,

¹ Some prefer to interpret, " my fleet."

² Or (Jerram), " Might slay her and flee away."

Silent we sat, till all agreed at last
 To go to where they were, albeit forbid.
 And there we see a Hellene galley's hull 1345
 With ranks of oar-blades fringed, sea-plashing wings,
 And fifty seamen at the tholes thereof
 Grasping their oars : and from their bonds set free
 Beside the galley's stern the young men stood.
 The prow with poles some steadied, some hung up 1350
 The anchor at the catheads, some in haste,
 The while they haled the hawsers through their hands,
 Dropped ladders for the strangers to the sea.
 But we spared not, so soon as we beheld 1355
 Their cunning wiles : we grasped the stranger-maid,
 The hawser-bands, and strove to wrench the helms¹
 Out through the stern-ports of the stately ship.
 And rang our shouts :—" By what right do ye steal
 Images from our land and priestesses ?
 Who and whose son art thou, to kidnap her ? " 1360
 But he, " Orestes I, her brother, son
 Of Agamemnon, know thou. She I bear
 Hence is my sister whom I lost from home."
 Yet no less clung we to the stranger-maid,
 And would have forced to follow us to thee, 1365
 Whence came these fearful buffets on my cheeks.
 For in their hands steel weapons had they none,
 Nor we ; but there were clenched fists hailing blows,
 And those young champions twain dashed spurning feet,
 As javelins swift, on belly and rib of us. 1370
 Scarce had we grappled, ere our limbs waxed faint ;
 And marked with ghastly scars of strife we fled
 Unto the cliffs, some bearing gory weals

¹ Broad-bladed steering-oars, one on each side of the stern.

Upon their heads, and others on their eyes.
 Yet, rallying on the heights, more warily 1375
 We fought, and fell to hurling stones on them.
 But archers, planted on her stern, with shafts
 Back beat us, that we needs must draw aloof.
 Meanwhile a great surge shoreward swung the ship ;
 And, for the maiden feared to wade the surf, 1380
 On his left shoulder Orestes lifted her,
 Strode through the sea, upon the ladder leapt,
 And in the good ship set his sister down,
 With that heaven-fallen image of Zeus' child.
 Then from the galley's midst rang loud and clear 1385
 A shout—"Ye seamen of this Hellene ship,
 Grip oars, and churn the swirling breakers white ;
 For we have won the prize for which we sailed
 The cheerless sea within the Clashing Rocks." [1390
 Then, with glad gasp loud-bursting from each breast,
 Smote they the brine. The ship made way, while yet
 Within the bay ; but, as she cleared its mouth,
 By fierce surge met, she laboured heavily ;
 For suddenly swooped a wild gust on the ship, [1395
 Stern-foremost thrusting her. With might and main
 They strove with fate,¹ but towards the land again
 The back-sweep drave the ship : then stood and prayed
 Agamemnon's daughter, " Leto's Child, O Maid,
 Save me, thy priestess ! Bring me unto Greece
 From alien land ; forgive my theft of thee ! 1400
 Thy brother, Goddess, dost thou also love :
 O then believe that I too love my kin ! "
 The mariners' pæan to the maiden's prayer
 Answered, the while with shoulders bare they strained

¹ κέντρα (Nauck and Jerram), for κύμα, " they fought the waves."

The oar-blade deftly to the timing-cry. 1405
 Nearer the rocks—yet nearer—came the bark.
 Then of us some rushed wading through the sea,
 And some held nooses ready for the cast.¹
 And straightway hitherward I sped to thee,
 To tell to thee, O King, what there befell. 1410
 On then! Take with thee chain and cord in hand.
 For, if the sea-swell sink not into calm,
 Hope of deliverance have the strangers none.
 The sea's Lord, dread Poseidon, graciously
 Looketh on Ilium, wroth with Pelops' line, 1415
 And now shall give up Agamemnon's son
 To thine hands and thy people's, as is meet,
 With her who, traitress to the Goddess proved,
 That sacrifice in Aulis hath forgot.

CHORUS.

Woe is thee, Iphigeneia! With thy brother 1420
 Caught in the tyrant's grasp shalt thou be slain!

THOAS.

What ho! ye citizens of this my land,
 Up, bridle ye your steeds!—along the shore
 Gallop! The stranding of the Hellene ship
 Await ye there, and, with the Goddess' help, 1425
 Make speed to hunt yon impious caitiffs down.
 And ye, go hale my swift keels to the wave,
 That, both by sea and coursing steeds on land,
 These we may take, and down the rugged crag

¹ To lasso the ship or those on board. Paley understands, "Some of *them*, etc.," understanding it of the crew's attempts to "secure the ship to some object on shore, and prevent it being dashed against the rocks."

May hurl them, or on stakes impale alive. 1430
 You women, who were privy to this plot,
 Hereafter, when my leisure serveth me,
 Will I yet punish. Having now in hand
 The instant need, I will not idly wait.

Athena appears in mid-air above the stage.

ATHENA.

Whither, now whither, speed'st thou this pursuit, 1435
 King Thoas? Hear my words—Athena's words.
 Cease from this chase, from pouring forth thine host;
 For, foreordained by Loxias' oracles,
 Orestes came, to escape the Erinnyes' wrath,
 And lead his sister unto Argos home, 1440
 And bear the sacred image to my land,
 So to win respite from his present woes.
 This is my word to thee: Orestes, whom
 Thou think'st to take in mid-sea surge, and slay—
 Even now for my sake doth Poseidon lull
 To calm the breakers, speeding on his bark. 1445
 And thou, Orestes, to mine hests give heed—
 For, though afar, thou hear'st the voice divine:—
 Taking the image and thy sister, go;
 And when thou com'st to Athens' god-built towers,
 A place there is upon the utmost bounds 1450
 Of Attica, hard by Karystus' ridge,
 A holy place, named Halae of my folk.
 Build there a shrine, and set that image up,
 Named from the Taurian land and from thy toils,
 The travail of thy wandering through Greece, 1455
 Erinnyes-goaded. Men through days to come
 Shall chant her—Artemis the Taurian Queen.

This law ordain : when folk keep festival,
 In quittance for thy slaughter one must hold
 To a man's throat the sword, and spill the blood 1460
 For hallowing and the Goddess' honour's sake.
 Thou, Iphigeneia, by the holy stairs
 Of Brauron must this Goddess' warden be.
 There shalt thou die, and be entombed, and webs
 Of all fair vesture shall they offer thee 1465
 Which wives who perish in their travail-tide
 Leave in their homes. I charge thee, King, to send
 Homeward these maids of Hellas from thy land
 For their true hearts' sake. I delivered thee
 Erstwhile, Orestes, balancing the votes 1470
 On Ares' mount ; and this shall be a law—
The equal tale of votes acquits the accused.
 Now from this land thy sister bear o'ersea,
 Agamemnon's son : Thoas, be wroth no more.

THOAS.

Athena, Queen, who hears the words of Gods, 1475
 And disobeyeth them, is sense-bereft.
 Lo, I against Orestes and his sister
 Chafe not, that he hath borne the image hence.
 What boots it to defy the mighty Gods ?
 Let them with Artemis' statue to thy land 1480
 Depart, and with fair fortune set it up.
 I unto happy Greece will send withal
 These maids, according as thine hest enjoins ;
 Will stay the spear against the strangers raised,
 And the ships, Goddess, since it is thy will. 1485

ATHENA.

'Tis well : for thee, for Gods, is Fate too strong.

Forth, breezes ! Waft ye Agamemnon's son
To Athens : even I will voyage with him,
Keeping my sister's holy image safe.

CHORUS.

Speed with fair fortune, in bliss speed on 1490
For the doom reversed, for the life re-won.
Pallas Athena, Queen adored
Of mortals on earth, of Immortals in heaven,
We will do according to this thy word :
For above all height to which hope hath soared
Is the glad, glad sound to our ears that is given.

Hail, reverèd Victory :
Rest upon my life ; and me
Crown, and crown eternally.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

IPHIGENEIA AT AULIS.

ARGUMENT.

WHEN the hosts of Hellas were mustered at Aulis beside the narrow sea, with purpose to sail against Troy, they were hindered from departing thence by the wrath of Artemis, who suffered no favouring wind to blow. Then, when they enquired concerning this, Kalchas the prophet proclaimed that the anger of the Goddess would not be appeased save by the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, eldest daughter of Agamemnon, captain of the host. Now she abode yet with her mother in Mycenæ ; but the king wrote a lying letter to her mother, bidding her send her daughter to Aulis, there to be wedded to Achilles. All this did Odysseus devise, but Achilles knew nothing thereof. When the time drew near that she should come, Agamemnon repented him sorely. And herein is told how he sought to undo the evil, and of the maiden's coming, and how Achilles essayed to save her, and how she willingly offered herself for Hellas' sake, and of the marvel that befell at the sacrifice.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AGAMEMNON, *captain of the host.*

OLD SERVANT *of Agamemnon.*

MENELAUS, *brother of Agamemnon, husband of Helen.*

KLYTEMNESTRA, *wife of Agamemnon.*

IPHIGENEIA, *daughter of Agamemnon.*

ACHILLES, *son of the sea-goddess Thetis.*

MESSENGER.

CHORUS, *consisting of maidens of Chalkis in the isle of Eubœa,
who have crossed over to Aulis to see the fleet.*

Orestes, *infant son of Agamemnon, attendants, and guards of
the chiefs.*

SCENE :—In the Greek Camp at Aulis, outside the tent of
Agamemnon.

IPHIGENEIA AT AULIS.

Night. A lamp burning in Agamemnon's tent. Old Servant waiting without. Agamemnon appears at entrance of tent.

AGAMEMNON.

ANCIENT, before this tent come stand.

OLD SERVANT (*coming forward*).

I come. What purpose hast thou in hand,
Agamemnon, my king ?

AGAMEMNON.

And wilt thou not hasten ?

OLD SERVANT.

I haste.

For the need of mine eld scant sleep provideth—
This eld o'er mine eyelids like vigilant sentry is placed. 5

AGAMEMNON.

What star in the heaven's height yonder rideth ?¹

¹ Agamemnon, absorbed in his occupation within, has taken no note of the lapse of time. Now he suddenly recognises that the element of time is all-important, both

OLD SERVANT.

Sirius : nigh to the Pleiads seven
He is sailing yet through the midst of heaven.

AGAMEMNON.

Sooth, voice there is none, nor slumberous cheep
Of bird, nor whisper of sea ; and deep 10
Is the hush of the winds on Euripus that sleep.

OLD SERVANT.

Yet without thy tent, Agamemnon my lord,
Why dost thou pace thus feverishly ?
Over Aulis yonder is night's peace poured :
They are hushed which along the walls keep ward.
Come, pass we within.

AGAMEMNON.

I envy thee,
Ancient, and whoso unperilled may pace

that his messenger may leave the camp unperceived, and that the latter may be in time to stop Iphigeneia at a distance from Aulis. Hence (the stars being the night-clocks of the ancients) his question betrays his fear—"Is there yet time?" The servant's answer implies that the dawn is yet distant; and the king is further reassured as he observes that the first chirp of the waking bird has not broken the stillness, and that the winds, which probably blew adversely all day, and fell to a dead calm at night, gave no token of stirring. It has been objected that Sirius is *not* "near the Pleiads," since, though he is indeed in the next constellation but one to theirs, there is a considerable space of sky between them. But, when we remember that the stars were to the ancients the figures on the dial of the night, we observe that Sirius is *the figure next before the Pleiads*. He touches the western horizon about half an hour before them.

Life's pathway unheeded and unrenowned :
But little I envy the high in place.

OLD SERVANT.

Yet the life of these is glory-crowned. 20

AGAMEMNON.

Ah, still with the glory is peril bound.
Sweetly ambition tempteth, I trow ;
Yet is it neighbour to sore disquiet.
For the Gods' will clasheth with thy will now,
Wrecking thy life : by men that riot
With divers desires, whom ye cannot content,
Now is the web of thy life's work rent.

OLD SERVANT.

Nay, in a king I love not this repining.
Atreus begat thee, Agamemnon, not
Only to bask in days all cloudless-shining : 30
Needs must be joy and sorrow in thy lot.
Mortal thou art : though marred be thy designing,
Still to fulfilment is the Gods' will brought.

Thou the star-glimmer of thy lamp hast litten,
Writest a letter—in thine hand yet grasped,—
Then thou erasest that which thou hast written,
Sealest, and breakest bands as soon as clasped ;

Castest to earth the pine-slip, ever streaming 40
Tears from thine eyes ; nor lacketh anything
Of madness in thy gestures aimless-seeming.
What is thy grief, thy strange affliction, king ?

Come, let me share thy story : to the loyal
 Thou wilt reveal it, to the true and tried
 Whom, at thy bridal, with the dower royal
 Tyndareus sent to wait upon thy bride.

AGAMEMNON.

Three daughters Leda, child of Thestius, bare,
 Phœbê, and Klytemnestra mine own wife, 50
 And Helen. Wooing this last, princes came
 In fortune foremost in all Hellas-land.
 With fearful threatenings breathed they murder, each
 Against his rivals, if he won her not.
 Then sore perplexed was Tyndareus her sire, 55
 How, giving or refusing, he should 'scape
 Shipwreck :¹ and this thing came into his mind,
 That each to each the suitors should make oath,
 And clasp right hands, and with burnt sacrifice
 Should pour drink-offerings, and swear to this :— 60
 Whose wife soever Tyndareus' child should be,
 Him to defend : if any from her home
 Stole her and fled, and thrust her lord aside,
 To march against him, and to raze his town,
 Hellene or alien, with their mailed array. 65
 So when they had pledged them thus, and cunningly
 Old Tyndareus had by craft outwitted them,
 He let his daughter midst the suitors choose
 Him unto whom² Love's sweet winds wafted her.
 She chose—O had she never chosen him !— 70
 Menelaus. Then from Phrygia he who judged
 The Goddesses, as Argive legend tells,

¹ ἄθραυστα (England).

² ὅποι (England).

To Sparta came, his vesture flower-bestarred
Gleaming with gold, barbaric bravery,
Loved Helen, and was loved, stole her and fled 75
To Ida's steadings, when from home afar
Menelaus was. Through Hellas frenzy-stung
He sped, invoking Tyndareus' ancient oath,
Claiming of all their bond to help the wronged.
Thereat up sprang the Hellenes spear in hand, 80
Donned mail of fight, and to this narrow gorge
Of Aulis came, with galleys and with shields,
And many a horse and chariots many arrayed.
And me for Menelaus' sake they chose
For chief, his brother. Would some other man 85
Might but have won the honour in my stead !
Now when the gathered host together came,
At Aulis did we tarry weather-bound.
Then the seer Kalchas bade in our despair
Slay Iphigeneia, her whom I begat, 90
To Artemis who dwelleth in this land ;
So should we voyage, and so Phrygia smite ;
But if we slew her not, it should not be.
I, when I heard this, bade Talthybius
Dismiss the host with proclamation loud, 95
Since I would never brook to slay my child.
Whereat my brother, pleading manifold pleas,
To the horror thrust me. In a tablet's folds
I wrote, and bade therein my wife to send
Her daughter, as to be Achilles' bride, 100
Extolled therein the hero's high repute,
Said, with Achaia's host he would not sail
Except a bride of our house came to Phthia.
Yea, this I counted should persuade my wife,
This framing of feigned spousals for the maid. 105

This none Achaian knoweth with me, save
 Kalchas, Odysseus, Menelaus. Now
 That wrong I here revoke, and write the truth
 Within this scroll, which in the gloom of night
 Thou saw'st me, ancient, open and reseal. 110
 Up, go, this letter unto Argos bear ;
 And what the tablet hideth in its folds,
 All things here written, will I tell to thee,
 For loyal to my wife and house art thou.

OLD SERVANT.

Speak, and declare, that the tale heard
 Ring true beside the written word.

AGAMEMNON.

(*Reads*).

" *This add I to my letter writ before :—
 Daughter of Leda, do thou send
 Thy daughter not unto the waveless shore
 Of Aulis, where the bend* 120

*Of that sea-pinion of Eubæa lies
 Gulf-shapen. Ere we celebrate
 Our daughter's marriage-tide solemnities,
 A season must we wait."*

OLD SERVANT.

Yet, if Achilles lose his plighted spouse,
 Will not his anger's tempest swell
 Against thee and thy wife ? Sure, perilous
 Is this !—thy meaning tell.

AGAMEMNON.

His name, no more, Achilles lends,—hath known
 Nought of a bride, nor aught we planned, 130

Nor how to him I have, in word alone,
Given my daughter's hand.

OLD SERVANT.

Fearfully, Agamemnon, was this done,
That thou shouldst bring thy child, O King,
Hither, named bride unto the Goddess' son,
Yet a burnt-offering !

AGAMEMNON.

Woe ! I was all distraught :
I am reeling ruin-ward !
Speed thy foot, ancient, slacking nought
For eld.

OLD SERVANT.

I speed, my lord. 140

AGAMEMNON.

Sit thee not down where the forest-founts leap,
Neither be bound by the spell of sleep.

OLD SERVANT.

Breathe not such doubt abhorred !

AGAMEMNON.

When thou comest where ways part, keenly then
Watch, lest a chariot escape thy ken,
Whose rolling wheels peradventure may bear
My daughter hitherward, even to where
Be the ships of the Danaan men.
For, if thou light on her escort-train,

Thou turn them aback, grasp, shake the rein : 150
To the halls Cyclopiā speed them again.

OLD SERVANT.

Yea, this will I do.

AGAMEMNON.

From the gates forth go—¹

OLD SERVANT.

Yet how shall thy wife and thy daughter know
My faith herein, that the thing is so ?

AGAMEMNON.

Keep thou this seal, whose impress lies
On the letter thou bearest. Away !—the skies
Already are grey, and they kindle afar
With the dawn's first flush, and the Sun-god's car.

Now help thou my strait !

[*Exit Old Servant.*

No man to the end is fortunate, 160

Happy is none :

For a lot unvexed never man yet won. [*Exit.*

Enter Chorus.

CHORUS.

(*Str. 1*)

I have come to the Aulian sea-gulf's verge,
To her gleaming sands,
I have voyaged Euripus' rushing surge
From the city that stands

¹ Adopting Nauck's arrangement and reading for ll. 149—152.

Queen of the Sea-gate, Chalkis mine,
 On whose bosom-fold
 Arethusa gleameth, the fountain divine,—
 Have come to behold 170
 The Achaian array, and the heroes' oars
 That the pine-keels speed
 Of a thousand galleys to Troyland's shores,
 Whom the two kings lead,—
 Who with prince Menelaus the golden-haired,
 As our own lords say,
 And with King Agamemnon the high-born, fared
 On the vengeance-way,
 On the quest of her whom the herdsman drew
 From beside the river 180
 Of whispering reeds, his sin-wage due,—
 Aphroditê the giver,—
 Promised, when into the fountain down
 Spray-veiled she descended,¹
 When with Hera and Pallas for beauty's crown
 The Cyprian contended.

(*Ant.* 1)

And through Artemis' grove of sacrifice
 Hasting I came,
 While swift in my cheeks did the crimson rise
 Of my maiden shame :
 For to look on the shields, on the tents agleam 190
 With arms, was I fain,
 And on thronging team upon chariot team.
 There marked I twain,
 The Oïlid Aias and Telamon's child,
 Salamis' pride.

¹ See *Andromache*, 284—5.

By the shifting maze of the draughts beguiled
 Sat side by side
 Protesilaus and he that was sprung
 Of Poseidon's seed,
 Palamedes : and there, by the strong arm flung
 Of Diomede, 200
 Did the discus leap, and he joyed therein ;
 And hard beside him
 Was Meriones of the War-god's kin—
 Men wondering eyed him.
 And Laertes' son from the isle-hills far
 Through the sea-haze gleaming ;
 And Nireus, of all that host of war
 The goodliest-seeming.

(*Mesode*)

There was Achilles, whose feet are as winds for the
 storm-rush unreined :
 Him I beheld who of Thetis was born, who of Cheiron
 was trained ; 210
 Clad in his armour he raced, over sand, over shingle he
 strained,

Matching in contest of swiftness his feet with a chariot
 of four,
 Rounding the sweep of the course for the victory :—
 rang evermore
 Shouts from Pherêtid Eumêlus, and aye with the goad
 that he bore

Smote he his horses most goodly—I saw them, saw
 gold-glitter deck 220
 Richly their bits ; and the midmost, the car-yoke who
 bore on their neck,

Dappled were they, with a hair here and there like a
snow-smitten fleck.

They that in traces without round the perilous turning-
post swept,

Bays were they, spotted their fetlocks : Peleides beside
them on-leapt :

Sheathed in his harness, unflagging by car-rail and
axle he kept.

230

(Str. 2)

And I came where the host of the war-ships lies,—
A marvel past telling,—

To fill with the vision my maiden eyes

And my heart joy-swelling.

And there, on the rightward wing arrayed,

Was Phlia's Myrmidon battle-aid,

Fifty galleys swift for the war,

With the ranks of oars by their bulwarks swayed,

And high on their sterns in effigies golden

The Nereïd Goddesses gleamed afar,

240

The sign by Achilles' host upholden.

(Ant. 2)

Hard by, keels equal by tale unto these

Did the Argives gather ;

With Talaüs' fosterling passed they the seas,

Mekisteus his father,—

And with Sthenelus, Kapaneus' son, at his side.

And there did the galleys of Attica ride

With the scion of Theseus, the next to the left,—

Ships threescore,—and the peerless pride

Of their blazonry was a winged car, bearing

250

Pallas, with horses of hooves uncleft,

A blessèd sign unto folk sea-faring.

(Str. 3)

Bœotia's barks sea-plashing
 Fifty there lay :
 I marked their ensigns flashing.
 Kadmus had they
 Whose Golden Dragon shone
 On each stern's garnison ;
 And Leitus Earth's son
 Led their array.
 Galleys from Phocis came ;
 In Locrian barks, the same
 By tale, went Thronium's fame
 'Neath Aias' sway.

260

(Ant. 3)

Atreides' Titan-palace,
 Mycenæ, sent
 Thronged decks of five-score galleys :
 Adrastus¹ went
 As friend with friend, to take
 Her, who the home-bonds brake
 For alien gallant's sake,
 For chastisement.
 There, ships of Pylos' king,
 Gerenian Nestor, bring
 The weird bull-blazoning
 That Alpheus lent.

270

(Epode)

Gouneus, King of Ainian men,
 Marshalled galleys two and ten :
 Hard thereby the bulwarks tower

¹ There is nowhere else any mention of an Adrastus in this connection. Hence others read ἀδελφός, "his brother," others ἀτρεστος, "the dauntless."

Of the lords of Elis' power, 280
Whom the host Epeians name :
Eurytus to lead them came ;
Led the Taphians argent-oared
Therewithal, which owned for lord
Phyleus' scion Meges, who
From the Echinad Isles, whereto
No man sails, his war-host drew.

Aias, Salamis' fosterling,
Held in touch his rightward wing
With their left who nearest lay : 290
Helm-obeying keels were they
Twelve, which, marshalled uttermost,
Closed the line that fringed the coast,
As I heard, and now might mark.
Whoso with barbaric bark
Meets him, from the grapple stern
Never home shall he return.

Lo, the goodly sea-array
That mine eyes have seen to-day !
Erst the great war-muster's story 300
Through mine home rang : now its glory
In mine heart shall live for aye.

*Enter Old Servant, grasping at a letter which Menelaus
has snatched from him.*

OLD SERVANT.

Menelaus, this is outrage !—shame on thee !

MENELAUS.

Stand back ! Thou art all too loyal to thy lord.

OLD SERVANT.

A proud reproach thou castest upon me. 305

MENELAUS.

If thou o'erstep thy duty, thou shalt rue.

OLD SERVANT.

'Tis not for thee to unseal the scroll I bare.

MENELAUS.

Nor yet for thee to bring to all Greeks bane.

OLD SERVANT.

With others argue that ; but this restore.

MENELAUS.

I will not yield it up !

OLD SERVANT.

Nor I let go ! 310

MENELAUS.

Soon then my staff shall dash thine head with blood.

OLD SERVANT.

Glorious it were in my lord's cause to die.

MENELAUS.

Unhand !—a slave, thou art overfull of words.

OLD SERVANT.

Ho, master ! outrage !—lo, this man hath snatched

By violence thy letter from mine hand, 315
Agamemnon, nor will have regard to right !

Enter Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON.

Ha !

What this tumult at my doors, and this unseemly
brawl upstirred ?

MENELAUS.

Mine the right to speak is—mine before this fellow to
be heard.

AGAMEMNON.

Wherefore dost thou strive with him, Menelaus, and
by violence hale ?

[Men. releases O.S., who exit.]

MENELAUS.

Look me in the face, that I may make beginning of the
tale. 320

AGAMEMNON.

Shall I dread to lift mine eyelids, who of dreadless
Atreus came ?

MENELAUS.

Seëst thou this tablet—this, the bearer of a tale of
shame ?

AGAMEMNON.

I behold it,—and from thine hand first do thou sur-
render it.

MENELAUS.

Never, ere I show to all the Danaans that therein is
writ !

AGAMEMNON.

How?—and didst thou break my seal, and know'st
thou what thou shouldest not? 325

MENELAUS.

Yea, unto thy sorrow brake it, that I know thy secret
plot.

AGAMEMNON.

Ay?—and where didst seize him?—Gods, what front
of impudence is here!

MENELAUS.

Watching if thy child from Argos to the host were
drawing near.

AGAMEMNON.

What dost thou to spy upon me? Is not this done
shamelessly?

MENELAUS.

Mine own pleasure was my warrant. I am not thy
bondman—I. 330

AGAMEMNON.

Is not this outrageous? Wouldst thou limit in mine
house my power?

MENELAUS.

Yea; thy thoughts are shifty, changing ever with the
changing hour.

AGAMEMNON.

Subtly hast thou glozed the evil! Hateful is the artful
tongue!

MENELAUS.

But the treacherous heart, to friends disloyal, is a hoard
of wrong.

I would question thee, and do not thou with spirit
anger-jarred 335

Fence aside from thee the truth, nor I will press thee
over-hard.

Hast forgotten how thou fain wouldst lead the Greeks
to Ilium's shore,

Feignedst not to wish the thing, but in thine heart didst
crave it sore,

How to all men wast thou lowly, clasping hands of
amity,

Keeping open doors for whoso of the folk would seek
to thee, 340

Bidding all accost thee freely, challenging the modest
heart,

Seeking by thy shifts to buy advancement as in open
mart?

Ah, but when thy power was won, thou changedst all
thy mien : no more

Wast thou unto friends of days gone by a friend as
theretofore,—

Inaccessible, and seldom found at home. The noble-
souled 345

Ought not, raised to high estate, to turn him from the
paths of old,

Nay, but more than ever loyal then unto his friends
should be,

When his power to help is more than ever, through
prosperity.

First therein, where first I found thee base, I visit thee
with blame.

Then, when thou and all the host of Hellas unto Aulis
came, 350
Nought wast thou, at Heaven's visitation utterly dis-
mayed,
When the wafting breezes failed thee, when the sons of
Danaus bade
Send the ships disbanded thence, nor toil at Aulis all
in vain.
O thy rueful face, thy wildered eye, lest thou on Priam's
plain,
Thou, the captain of a thousand galleys, ne'er shouldst
pour thy spears ! 355
"What shall I do ? " didst thou ask me ; " What device,
and whence, appears,
That of lordship I be not bereft, nor lose my fair re-
nown ? "
Then, when Kalchas on the altar bade thee lay thy
child's life down
Unto Artemis,—the Danaïds so should sail,—with glad-
ness filled
Blithely promisedst to slay thy daughter ; yea, didst
send free-willed— 360
Not constrained, thou canst not say it—to thy queen,
that hitherward
She should send thy child, as who should take Achilles
for her lord :—
Lo, the selfsame sky o'erhead which heard thee then
record thy vow !—¹
Now thou turn'st about, art found recasting that thy
message now,
Saying thou wilt ne'er be slayer of thy child ! So is it
still— 365

¹ Adopting Paley's arrangement of lines.

Many and many a man is like thee,¹ toileth with un-
flagging will
Up the heights of power ; thereafter from its summit
falls with shame,
Some through blindness of the people, some be all
themselves to blame,
They whose nerveless hands can ward the city not that
they have won.
But, for me, 'tis hapless Hellas most of all that I be-
moan : 370
Fain she is of high achievement, yet shall caitiff aliens
make
Her a mock, who 'scape her hands for thine and for
thy daughter's sake.
Ne'er may I for kinship's cause exalt a man to rule the
land,
Nor to lead a host ! He needeth wisdom who would
men command ;
For 'tis his to helm a nation who hath wit to under-
stand. 375

CHORUS.

Fearful 'twixt brethren words of high disdain
And conflict are, when into strife they fall.

AGAMEMNON.

Now would I in turn upbraid thee, briefly, not exalting
high
Shameless brows of haughty scorning, nay, but ever
soberly, [380
As becomes a brother ; for the noble hold by chivalry.

¹ England's punctuation.

Answer, why this breath tempestuous, why these
bloodshot eyes of strife?

Who doth wrong thee? What dost crave? Dost
yearn to win a virtuous wife?

This I cannot find thee: her thou gainedst, vilely
ruledst thou.

What, must I, who have not erred, for thy transgression
suffer now?

Or doth mine advancement gall thee?—nay, but one
desire thou hast, 385

In thine arms to clasp a lovely woman!—reason dost
thou cast,

Yea, and honour, to the winds!—the pleasures of the
vile are base.

I, who erst took evil counsel, if I now give wisdom place,
Am I mad? Nay, rather thou, who, having lost an
evil spouse,

Wouldst re-win her, though thy loss be gain, God's
kindness to thy house.¹ 390

Those infatuate marriage-craving suitors swore an oath
indeed

Unto Tyndareus; yet these did Hope, I trow, the
Goddess, lead

On, and brought it more to pass than thou and all thy
strong control.

Lead them thou—O these are ready in the folly of their
soul!

God is not an undiscerning judge; his eyes are keen to
try

Oaths exacted by constraint, and troth-plight held un-
righteously. 395

¹ Or with special reference to line 392, "since the Goddess offers so to bless thine house."

Never I will slay my children, that in justice's despite
Thine avenging on a wife most wanton so may speed
aright,
While I waste through nights of weeping, pine through
days of misery
For my lawless, godless dealing with the children born
to me !
Lo, mine answer, brief and clear, and easy to be under-
stood. 400
If thou turn from wisdom, yet shall mine house follow
after good.

CHORUS.

This controverteth that thou saidst before ;
Yet good is thy resolve, to spare thy child.

MENELAUS.

Alas for wretched me ! Friends have I none !

AGAMEMNON.

Yea—if thou seek not to destroy thy friends. 405

MENELAUS.

How wilt thou prove thyself our father's son ?

AGAMEMNON.

By brotherhood in wisdom, not in folly.

MENELAUS.

Friends ought to feel friends' sorrow as their own.

AGAMEMNON.

By kindness, not unkindness, challenge me.

MENELAUS.

Wilt thou not then with Greece this travail share? 410

AGAMEMNON.

Hellas, like thee, hath God's stroke driven mad.

MENELAUS.

Vaunt then thy sceptre, traitor to thy brother!

I will betake me unto other means

And other friends. (*Enter Messenger in haste.*)

MESSENGER.

O King of Hellas' host,

Agamemnon, lo, thy child I bring to thee, 415

Named of thee Iphigeneia in thine halls.

Her mother Klytemnestra comes with her,

Orestes, too, the babe, to glad thine eyes

Who from thine home long time hast sojourned far.

But, after weary journeying, at a spring 420

Fair-flowing now the women bathe their feet,

They and their steeds—for midst the meadow-grass

We turned them loose, that they might browse therein.

I, to prepare thee, their forerunner come.

For the host knoweth it, so swiftly spread 425

The rumour of the coming of thy child.

And to the sight runs all the multitude

To see thy child; for folk in high estate

Famed and observed of all observers are.

"A bridal is it?"—they ask—"or what is toward? 430

Or hath the King, of yearning for his child,

Sent for his daughter?" Others might'st thou hear—

"To Artemis, to Aulis' Queen, they pay¹
 The maiden's spousal-rites! The bridegroom who?"
 Up then, prepare the maunds for sacrifice; 435
 Garland your heads:—thou too, prince Menelaus,
 Strike up the bridal hymn, and through the tents
 Let the flute ring, with sound of dancing feet;
 For gladsome dawns this day upon the maid.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis well—I thank thee: pass thou now within. 440
 Well shall the rest speed as Fate marcheth on.

[*Exit Messenger.*

Woe's me! What can I say, or where begin?
 Into what bonds of doom have I been cast!
 Me Fortune hath outwitted: she hath proved
 Too cunning far for all my stratagems! 445
 Lo now, what vantage cleaves to lowly birth!
 For such may lightly ease their hearts with tears,
 And tell out all their grief. The same pangs touch
 The high-born; but our life is tyrannized
 By dignity: we are the people's thralls. 450
 So is it with me, for I shame to weep,
 And yet shame not to weep, wretch that I am,
 Who am fallen into deepest misery!
 Lo now, what shall I say unto my wife, [455
 Or how receive her?—with what countenance meet?
 She hath undone me, coming midst mine ills
 Unbidden! Yet 'twas reason she should come
 With her own child, to render to the bride
 Love's service—where I shall be villain found!

¹ It was customary before a marriage to make offerings to Artemis on behalf of the bride. The tragic irony is obvious.

And the unhappy maid—why name her maid? 460
Hades meseems shall take her soon for bride.
O me, the pity of it! I hear her pray—
“Ah father, wilt thou slay me! Now such bridal
Mayst thou too find, and all whom thou dost love!”
Orestes at her side shall wail the grief 465
Unmeaning, deep with meaning, of the babe.
Alas, how Priam’s son hath ruined me,
Paris, whose sin with Helen wrought all this!

CHORUS.

I also—far as alien woman may
Mourn for the griefs of princes—pity thee. 470

MENELAUS.

Brother, vouchsafe to me to grasp thine hand.

AGAMEMNON.

I give it. Thine the triumph, mine the pang.

MENELAUS.

I swear by Pelops, of my sire and thine
Named father, and by Atreus our own sire,
That from mine heart’s core I will speak to thee, 475
To serve no end, but all mine inmost thought.
I, seeing how thine eyes are streaming tears,
Pity thee, and the answering tear I shed;
And from the words erst uttered I draw back,
Thy foe no more: lo, in thy place I stand. 480
And I exhort thee, neither slay thy child,
Nor choose my good for thine. Unjust it were
That thou shouldst groan, and all my cup be sweet,

That thy seed die, and mine behold the light.
For, what would I? Can I not find a bride 485
Peerless elsewhere, if I for marriage yearn?
How, should I lose—whom least I ought to lose—
A brother, win a Helen, bad for good?
Mad was I and raw-witted, till I viewed
Things near, and saw what slaying children means.
Yea also, pity for the hapless maid [490
Doomed to be slaughtered for my bridal's sake,
Stole o'er me, on our kinship when I thought.
For what with Helen hath thy child to do?
From Aulis let the host disbanded go! 495
But thou forbear to drown thine eyes with tears,
O brother mine, nor challenge me to weep.
If thou hast part in oracles touching her,
No part be mine!—my share I yield to thee.
“Swift change is here,” thou'lt say, “from those grim
words!” 500
Nay, but most meet: for love of him who sprang
From the same womb, I change. No knave's wont
this,
Ever to cleave unto the better part.

CHORUS.

Right noble speech, and worthy Tantalus,
Zeus' son! Thou shamest not thine ancestors. 505

AGAMEMNON.

Thanks, Menelaus, that beyond all hope
Thou hast spoken rightly, worthily of thee.
Strife betwixt brethren for a woman's sake
May rise, or of ambition; but I loathe

Kinship that bringeth bitterness to both. 510
 Nay, but we are tangled in the net of fate !
 We needs must work the murder of my child.

MENELAUS.

How ?—who shall force thee to destroy thine own ?

AGAMEMNON.

The whole array of the Achaian host.

MENELAUS.

Never, if thou to Argos send her back. 515

AGAMEMNON.

This might I secretly—*that* cannot I.

MENELAUS.

What ? Fear not thou the rabble overmuch.

AGAMEMNON.

Kalchas will tell the host the oracles.

MENELAUS.

Not if he first have died—this were not hard.

AGAMEMNON.

The whole seer-tribe is one ambitious curse ! 520

MENELAUS.

Abominable¹ and useless,—*while alive*.

¹ Reading γ' ἀρεστὸν (Nauck) for γε χρηστὸν, "For nothing good."

AGAMEMNON.

The fear that steals o'er me—is this not thine ?

MENELAUS.

If thou tell not, how should I understand ?

AGAMEMNON.

All this the seed of Sisyphus doth know.

MENELAUS.

Odysseus cannot injure thee and me. 525

AGAMEMNON.

He is aye shifty—a mob-partizan.

MENELAUS.

'Thrall to ambition is he—perilous bane.

AGAMEMNON.

Will he not rise, think'st thou, in the Argive midst
And tell the oracles that Kalchas spake,
And how I promised Artemis her victim, 530
And now play false ? And, rousing so the host,
Shall bid them slay thee, me, and sacrifice
The maiden ? Though to Argos I escape,
Yet will they come, destroy it, to the ground
Raze it with all its walls Cyclopian. 535
Even this is mine affliction, woe is me !
How by the Gods I am whelmed amidst despair !
Take heed for one thing, brother, through the host
Passing, that Klytemnestra hear this not,

Till I to Hades shall have sealed my child, 540
 That mine affliction be with fewest tears.
 And, stranger damsels, hold your peace hereof.

[*Exit Menelaus.*

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

O well for them for whom the Queen
 Of Love shall temper passion's fire,
 And bring fruition of desire
 With gentle pace and sober mien,

Whose souls are seas at rest, are spared
 The frenzy-thrill, the fever-pain,
 The spells that charm the arrows twain,
 The shafts of Love the golden-haired,

Whereof one flieth tipt with bliss, 550
 And one with ruin of unrest :—
 O Queen of Beauty, from my breast,
 My bridal bower, avert thou this !

Let love's sweet spells in measure meet
 Rest on me ; pure desires be mine :
 May Aphroditë's dayspring shine
 On me—avaunt her midnight heat !

(*Ant.*)

The hearts of men be diverse-wrought,
 Diverse their lives : but, ever clear
 Through all, true goodness shall appear ; 560
 And each high lesson thoroughly taught

Lends wings to soar to virtue's heaven :
 For in self-reverence wisdom is ;
 And to discern the right—to this
 An all-transforming charm is given.

Fadeless renown is shed thereby
 On life by Fame. Ah, glorious
 The quest of virtue is !—for *us*
 The cloistered virtue, chastity :

But, for the man—his inborn grace 570
 Of law and order maketh great,
 By service of her sons, the state :
 His virtue works by thousand ways.

(Epode.)

Thou camest, Paris, back to where,
 Mid Ida's heifers snowy fair,
 A neatherd, thou didst pipe such strain
 That old Olympus' spirit there
 Awoke again.¹
 Full-uddered kine in dreamy peace
 Browsed, when the summons came to thee
 To judge that Goddess-rivalry 580
 Whose issue sped thee unto Greece,
 Before the ivory palaces
 To stand, to see in Helen's eyne
 That burned on thine, the lovelight shine,
 To thrill with Eros' ecstasies.
 For which cause strife is leading all
 Hellas, with ships, with spears, to fall
 Upon Troy's tower-coronal.

Lo, lo, the great ones of the earth,
 How blest they be ! 590
 Iphigeneia, proud in birth
 From princes, see ;

¹ The mythical inventor of the shepherd's pipe.

For timorous is the horse's restive eye.¹ 620
 And this child take ye, Agamemnon's boy,
 Orestes, who is yet a wordless babe.
 How?—lulled to sleep, child, by the swaying car?
 Wake for thy sister's bridal smilingly;
 For thine heroic strain shall get for kin 625
 A hero, even the Nereid's godlike child.
 Hither, my daughter, seat thee at my side:
 Hard by thy mother, Iphigeneia, take
 Thy place, and to these strangers show my bliss.
 Lo, thy beloved father!—welcome him. 630

Enter Agamemnon.

IPHIGENEIA (*running to his arms*).

O mother, I outrun thee—be not wroth—
 And heart to heart I clasp my father close.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

O most of me revered, Agamemnon King,
 We come, obedient unto thy behest.

IPHIGENEIA.

Fain am I, father, on thy breast to fall, 635
 After so long! Though others I outrun,—
 For O, I yearn for thy face!—be not wroth.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child, this thou mayst: yea, ever, most of all
 The children I have borne, thou lov'st thy sire.

¹ Or (Headlam), "For timorous is the steed's eye, if none soothe."

IPHIGENEIA.

Father, so long it was—so glad am I! 640

AGAMEMNON.

And glad am I : thy words suffice for twain.

IPHIGENEIA.

Hail ! Well hast thou done, father, bringing me.

AGAMEMNON (*starts*).

Well?—child, I know not how to answer this.

IPHIGENEIA.

Ha !

So glad to see me—yet what troubled look !

AGAMEMNON.

On kings and captains weigheth many a care. 645

IPHIGENEIA.

This hour be mine—this one ! Yield not to care !

AGAMEMNON.

Yea, I am all thine now : my thoughts stray not.

IPHIGENEIA.

Unknit thy brow then : let love melt thine eye.

AGAMEMNON.

Lo, child, I joy—as I joy,¹ seeing thee.

¹ Apart from tragic irony, this would simply mean, "More than I can express." But similar phrases seem to have been generally used with sinister meaning. See *Medea*, 1011, *Iph. in T.* 575, *Troades* 626, *Electra* 289 and 1122.

IPHIGENEIA.

And yet—and yet—thine eyes are welling tears! 650

AGAMEMNON.

Yea, for the absence yet to come is long.

IPHIGENEIA.

I know not, know not, dear my sire, thy meaning.¹

AGAMEMNON.

Thy wise discernment stirs my grief the more.

IPHIGENEIA.

So I may please thee, folly will I talk.

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! (*aside*) This silence breaks my heart! (*aloud*) I
thank thee. 655

IPHIGENEIA.

Stay, father, with thy children stay at home!

AGAMEMNON.

I would. My wish is barred: there lies my grief.

¹ Commentators are agreed that this line cannot have been written as it stands, on the ground that 651, which is (on the face of it), natural and intelligible, does not suggest it, nor, again, does this suggest 653. Something like

“Nor thou nor I, dear father, know how long,”
would seem to be required. The line *may*, however, as it stands, mean, expanded, “A father does not talk in such terms of the parting due to a daughter’s marriage:—is there some hidden meaning in what you say?” Then the reference to her penetration, in Agamemnon’s answer, would be natural.

IPHIGENEIA.

Perish their wars, and Menelaus' wrongs !

AGAMEMNON.

My ruin shall be others' ruin first.

IPHIGENEIA.

Long absence thine hath been in Aulis' gulf. 660

AGAMEMNON.

Still hindered is the army's speeding forth.

IPHIGENEIA.

Where dwell the Phrygians, father, as men say ?

AGAMEMNON.

Where—O that Priamid Paris ne'er had dwelt !

IPHIGENEIA.

Far dost thou voyage, father, leaving me.

AGAMEMNON.

Thou art in like case with thy father, child. 665

IPHIGENEIA.

(Sighs) Would it were meet that I might voyage with thee !

AGAMEMNON.

Thou too must voyage where thou shalt think on me.

IPHIGENEIA.

Shall I sail with my mother, or alone ?

AGAMEMNON.

Alone, from mother severed and from sire.

IPHIGENEIA.

How, hast thou found me, father, a new home ? 670

AGAMEMNON.

Enough ! It fits not maidens know such things.

IPHIGENEIA.

Speed back from Phrygia, father, victor there.

AGAMEMNON.

A sacrifice must I first offer here.

IPHIGENEIA.

Yea, thou must reverence heaven with holy rites.

AGAMEMNON.

This thou shalt see—shalt by the laver stand. 675

IPHIGENEIA.

Father, shall I lead dances round the altar ?

AGAMEMNON.

O happier thou in ignorance than I !

Pass thou within where none but maids shall see.

One sad kiss first, one clasp of thy right hand,

Ere thy long sojourn from thy father far. 680

O bosom, O ye cheeks, O golden hair !

On you what burden Phrygia's Town hath laid

And Helen ! But no more—the sudden flood
 Bursts o'er me from mine eyes as I touch thee !
 Pass into the pavilion. (*Exit Iph.*) Pardon me, 685
 O Leda's child, if well-nigh breaks my heart
 To yield to Achilles' hand my daughter, mine.
 Such partings make for bliss, but none the less
 They wring the heart, when fathers to strange homes
 Yield children for whose sake they have laboured long.
 [690

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I am not so dull ; be sure that I no less
 Shall feel this pang—wherefore I chide thee not—
 When I with marriage-hymns lead forth the maid.
 But custom joined with time shall deaden pain.
 His name, to whom thou hast betrothed my child, 695
 I know ; his land, his lineage, would I learn.

AGAMEMNON.

The Nymph Aegina was Asôpus' child :—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And did a mortal wed her, or a God ?

AGAMEMNON.

Zeus. Aiakus he begat, Oenônê's lord.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Which son of Aiakus possessed his house ? 700

AGAMEMNON.

Peleus ; and Peleus wedded Nereus' child.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

By the God granted, or in heaven's despite?

AGAMEMNON.

'Twas Zeus betrothed her, and her father¹ gave.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Where did he wed her?—'neath the heaving sea?

AGAMEMNON.

Where Cheiron dwells at Pelion's sacred foot. 705

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Where tribes of Centaurs have their haunt, men say?

AGAMEMNON.

Yea, there the Gods held Peleus' marriage-feast.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Did Thetis, or his father, rear Achilles?

AGAMEMNON.

Cheiron, that he might learn not vile men's ways.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay so!

Wise was the teacher, wiser yet the sire. 710

AGAMEMNON.

Such hero is to be thy daughter's lord.

¹ Lit. "he who had (paternal) control over her."

KLYTEMNESTRA.

None better. In what Greek town is his home?

AGAMEMNON.

On Phthia's marches, by Apidanus.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Thither wilt thou lead hence thy child and mine?

AGAMEMNON.

Nay, his part this who taketh her to wife. 715

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Blessings on them! On what day shall they wed?

AGAMEMNON.

When comes full-orbed the moon with blessing crowned.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast slain the Goddess' victim for our child?

AGAMEMNON.

So purpose I: even this we have in hand.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Thereafter wilt thou hold the marriage-feast? 720

AGAMEMNON.

When to the Gods I have done meet sacrifice.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And I, where shall I make the women's feast?

AGAMEMNON.

Here, by the Argive galleys' stately sterns.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Here, quotha!—yet it must be.¹ Fair befall!

AGAMEMNON.

Know'st thy part, lady, then? My bidding do. 725

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What thing? Obedience is my wont to thee.

AGAMEMNON.

Here, where the bridegroom is, will I myself—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What mother's office in mine absence do?

AGAMEMNON.

With help of Danaans give thy child away.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

But I—where must I tarry all this while? 730

AGAMEMNON.

To Argos go: for thy young daughters care.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And leave my child?—and who shall raise the torch?

¹ *κάλως ἀν' ἀγκύρας τε*; "Mid hawsers and ships' anchors!" is Palmer's ingenious emendation, adopted by England.

AGAMEMNON.

I will provide such bridal torch as fits.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

All custom outraged!—nought is that to thee!

AGAMEMNON.

To mingle with armed hosts beseems not thee,— 735

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Beseems that mother give away her child!

AGAMEMNON.

Nor that those maids at home be left alone.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

They in safe maiden-bowers be warded well.

AGAMEMNON.

Nay, hear me—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

No! by the Argives' Goddess-queen!
Go, order things without: within doors I
Will order what is fitting for a bride.

740
[Exit.

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me, vain mine essay! My hope is foiled,
Who out of sight was fain to send my wife.
With subtle schemes against my best-beloved
I weave plots, yet am baffled everywhere.
But none the less with Kalchas will I go,

745

The priest, the Goddess' pleasure to enquire—
 For me ill doom, for Hellas travail sore.
 The wise man in his house should keep a wife
 Helpful and good—or never take a bride.¹

750
 [*Exit.*

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Unto Simoïs, unto the silver-swirling
 Eddies, shall come the Hellene host,
 With galleys, with battle-gear onward hurling
 To the plain of Phœbus, the Troyland coast,
 Where tosseth Cassandra her tresses golden
 With their garlands of green-leaved bay enfolden,
 As they tell, when by mighty compulsion holden 760
 Her soul is on storm-winds of prophecy tost.

(*Ant.*)

On the heights of their towers shall the Trojans, en-
 ringing
 The ramparts of Troy, in their harness stand,
 When over the waters the War-god, bringing
 The stately galleys with oars, to the strand
 Draweth near, where the runnels of Simoïs are sliding,
 To hale her, in Priam's halls who is hiding—
 Sister of Zeus' sons heaven-abiding— 770
 With buckler and spear unto Hellas-land.

(*Epode.*)

And the War-fiend shall girdle with slaughter
 Pergamus' towers of stone,
 And the captive's head back bend
 That the throat-shearing blade may descend,
 When low in the dust he hath brought her,
 Troy, from her height overthrown.

¹ Reading γαμῆν.

He shall make for her maids a lamenting,
 And the queen of Priam shall moan, 780
 And the daughter of Zeus shall know
 In that day, and the flood shall flow
 Of Helen's tears of repenting,
 Who hath left her husband lone.

Over me, over mine, may there loom—
 No, not in the third generation—
 Never such shadow of doom
 As shall haunt each gold-decked bride
 Of the Lydian, the Phrygian, nation,
 As, communing their looms beside,
 They shall murmur fearful-eyed,
 “Ah, who on the braids of my shining hair 790
 Clenching his grip till my tears down shower,
 Me from my perishing country shall tear
 As one plucketh a flower?—
 For thy sake, child of the swan arch-necked,
 If credence-worthy the story be
 That Leda bare to a winged bird thee,
 When Zeus with its plumes had his changed form
 decked,
 Or whether in scrolls of minstrelsy
 Such tales unto mortals hath Fable brought,
 Told out of season, and all for nought.” 800

Enter Achilles.

ACHILLES.

Where is Achaia's battle-chief hereby?
 What henchman will bear word that Peleus' son,
 Achilles, at his gates is seeking him?
 This tarrying here falls not alike on all;

For some there are of us who, yet unwed, 805
 Have left their dwellings wardenless, and here
 Sit idle on the shore, some that have wives
 And children : such strange longing for this war
 Hath upon Hellas fallen by heaven's will.
 Mine own, my righteous grievance, must I speak,—
 Let whoso will beside, his own cause plead :— [810
 Pharsalia's land and Peleus have I left,
 And through these light airs of Euripus wait,
 Checking my Myrmidons : yet urgent aye
 They cry, "Why dally, Achilles, ? How long time 815
 Yet must the Troyward-bound array wait on ?
 Act,¹ if thou canst ; else lead thy war-host home,
 Waiting no more on Atreus' son's delays.

Enter Klytemnestra.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child of the Nereïd Goddess, from within
 Thy voice I heard, and come without the tent. 820

ACHILLES.

Great Queen of Shamefastness,² what lady here
 Behold I crowned with peerless loveliness ?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

No marvel thou shouldst know me not, unseen
 Ere this :—thy shrinking modesty I praise.

¹ Reading $\delta\rho\alpha\ \delta'$.

² This invocation of the Goddess of Modesty (as though to protect him), reminds us that in Euripides' time the same reserve towards strangers, especially those of the opposite sex, was expected from a well-brought-up Greek youth, that we expect from girls.

ACHILLES.

[825

Who art thou? Why cam'st thou to Achaia's host—
A woman unto men with bucklers fenced?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I am Leda's daughter; Klytemnestra named
Am I: King Agamemnon is my lord.

ACHILLES.

Well hast thou said in brief what most imports:—
Yet shame were this, that I with women talk! . 830

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Stay—wherefore flee? Nay, give me thy right hand
To clasp, the prelude to espousals blest.

ACHILLES.

How say'st?—mine hand in thine? Ashamed were I
Before thy lord of such unsanctioned touch.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis wholly sanctioned, since thou art to wed 835
My child, O son of the Lady of the Sea.

ACHILLES.

What wedding this?—I know not what to say—
Except of crazed wits this strange utterance come.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis all men's nature so in shame to shrink
Before new kin and talk of spousal-rites. 840

ACHILLES.

Lady, thy daughter have I never wooed,
Nor word of marriage Atreus' sons have said.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What shall this mean? At my words marvel thou
In turn; for passing strange are thine to me.

ACHILLES.

Think:—we have common cause to search out this.
Perchance nor thou nor I speak false herein. [845

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How?—have I been abused? Seek I a bridal
Which is not, as doth seem? I am crushed with
shame!

ACHILLES.

Some one perchance hath mocked both thee and me.
Nay, lightly hold it, lay it not to heart. 850

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Farewell. I cannot with unshrinking eyes
Meet thine, who am made a liar, outraged so.

ACHILLES.

Farewell I bid thee too. I pass within
Yonder pavilion now to seek thy lord.

OLD SERVANT (*from within the tent*).

Stranger, Aiakus' scion, tarry thou: what ho, to thee I
call 855
Whom the Goddess bare!—and Leda's daughter, unto
thee withal.

ACHILLES.

Who through doors half-opened calleth?—calleth with
what fearful breath?

OLD SERVANT.

Bond am I; I scorn the title not—nor fortune suffereth.

ACHILLES.

Whose? Not mine art thou, no part in Agamemnon's
goods I have.

OLD SERVANT.

Hers, who stands before the tent: me Tyndareus her
father gave. 860

ACHILLES.

Lo, I stay: if aught thou wouldst, speak that for which
thou bad'st me wait.

OLD SERVANT.

Stand ye twain alone—none other near hereby—before
the gate?

ACHILLES.

Speak: alone we are. From out the king's pavilion
come thou nigher.

OLD SERVANT (*entering from tent*).

Fortune, and my foresight, save ye them whose saving
I desire!

ACHILLES.

Stately invocation this!—it may for needs to come
avail! 865

¹ Sarcastic—"There is no occasion for such high-flown appeals *now*: they *may* avail against future peril:"—neither Achilles nor Klytemnestra having any suspicion of present danger.

KLYTEMNESTRA (*as O. S. is about to kneel to her*).

Linger not to touch mine hand, if thou to me wouldst
tell thy tale.

OLD SERVANT.

Loyal to thee and to thy children well thou knowest
me, I ween,—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Yea, I know that from of old mine house's servant thou
hast been.

OLD SERVANT.

And that Agamemnon gat me in possession with thy
dower ?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou to Argos camest with me, hast been mine unto
this hour.

870

OLD SERVANT.

So it is : to thee devoted more than to thy lord am I.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Prithee now unveil thy secret, whatsoe'er the mystery.

OLD SERVANT.

Lo, thy child her very father with his own hand soon
shall slay—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How ?—avaunt the story, ancient ! Sure thy wit is all
astray !

OLD SERVANT.

Severing thine unhappy daughter's snowy neck with
murder's sword.

875

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, alas for me ! Now haply murder-frenzied is my lord.

OLD SERVANT.

Sane—save touching thee and this thy daughter : only
mad herein.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What the reason ? What avenging Demon¹ drives
him to the sin ?

OLD SERVANT.

Oracles, as Kalchas sayeth, that the host may pass
the sea.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Whither ? Woe for me, for thee, whose father waits
to murder thee ! 880

OLD SERVANT.

Unto Dardanus' halls, that Menelaus may bring Helen
home.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha ! is Helen's home-returning fraught with Iphi-
geneia's doom ?

OLD SERVANT.

Thou hast all : the sire will sacrifice thy child to Artemis.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And the marriage made the pretext !²—trained me from
my home to this !

¹ Since the House of Atreus was notoriously under the ban of ancient crimes, this occurs as a possible explanation.

² Reading *παρεῖχε*. England reads *γάμον τιν' εἶχε*, "And of marriage made he pretext."

OLD SERVANT.

So that thou shouldst gladly bring thy child to be
Achilles' bride. 885

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Daughter, to destruction com'st thou, and thy mother
at thy side!

OLD SERVANT.

Piteous lot is thine, is hers, and awful deed thy lord
essayed.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Woe is me! Undone! The fountains of my tears
may not be stayed!

OLD SERVANT.

If 'tis pain to be bereft of children, let the tear-flood
flow.¹

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, but ancient, whence hast heard it, sayest thou?
How dost thou know? 890

OLD SERVANT.

With a letter touching that aforetime written, hasted I.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Countermanding, or re-urging me to bring my child to
die?

OLD SERVANT.

Nay, forbidding thee to bring; for then thy lord was
sound of wit.

¹ Adopting England's reading.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Why then, bearing such a scroll, to me didst not deliver it ?

OLD SERVANT.

From me Menelaus snatched it, cause of all these miseries. 895

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child of Thetis, Son of Peleus, hearest thou these infamies ?

ACHILLES.

Yea, I hear thy sorrow, nor my part therein I tamely bear.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

They will slay my daughter, setting thine espousals for a snare !

ACHILLES.

Wroth am I against thy lord : I count it not a little thing.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I will not think shame to bow me down unto thy knees to cling,— 900

Mortal unto child of Goddess :—what is matron-pride to me ?

Lo, for whom above my daughter should I labour instantly ?

Ah, be thou, O goddess-born, protector unto my despair

And unto the maiden named thy bride, all vainly though it were.

All for thee I wreathed her ; leading her to be thy bride I came— 905

Came to slaughter leading her!—on thee shall fall reproach's shame,

Who didst shield her not; for though ye ne'er were linked in marriage-ties,

Yet the hapless maiden's husband wast thou called in any wise.

By thy beard I pray, thy right hand, by thy mother's deity!—

Since thy name was mine undoing, see thy name untarnished be. 910

Altar have I none to flee to, save thy knee, in my distress.

Not a friend is near me. Agamemnon's cruel recklessness

Thou hast seen; and I am come—a woman, as thou dost behold,—

Unto this array of seafolk, lawless, and to evil bold,

Yet, so they be willing, strong to help. If thou but dare extend 915

O'er mine head thine hand, our life is saved: if not, our life hath end.

CHORUS.

Strange is this motherhood, of potent spell:

All share it, all for offspring's sake will toil.

ACHILLES.

My whole soul's chivalry is to action stirred:—

Yet hath my soul learnt temperance in grief 920

For troubles, and in joy for triumphs won:

For such men are by reason schooled to pass

Through life well, in cool judgment self-reliant;—

True, pain sometimes rewards the over-wise,

Yet oft of self-reliance profit comes. 925
 Fostered by Cheiron, one that feared God most,
 Was I, and learned to tread no tortuous ways.
 And Atreus' sons, if righteously they lead,
 Will I obey; else will I not obey.
 Here, as in Troy, I'll keep me free man still, 930
 And, as I may, will grace a hero's part.
 Thee, lady, outraged by thy nearest kin,
 Will I, so far as such young champion can,
 Right; so shall my compassion buckler thee.
 Ne'er by her father slain shall be thy child, 935
 Once called my bride. I will not lend myself
 To be thy lord's tool in his subtle plots;
 Else this my name, though it have raised no steel,
 Shall slay thy daughter:—and the cause thereof
 Thy lord! My very blood were murder-tainted, 940
 If this maid, suffering wrongs intolerable,
 For my sake and my marriage be destroyed,
 With outrage past belief unmerited.
 So were I basest among Argive men,
 A thing of nought,—and Menelaus a man!— 945
 Sprung of no Peleus, but some vengeance-fiend,
 If my name shall do butchery for thy lord!
 No, by the foster-son of Ocean's waves,
 Nereus, the sire of Thetis who bare me,
 King Agamemnon shall not touch thy child— 950
 Not on her robe to lay a finger-tip!
 Else half-barbaric Sipylus¹ were a city,
 Whence sprang the line of yonder war-chief's house,
 And Phthia's name were nowhere named of men.

¹ In Lydia. The Greek, in view of all that the word *πόλις* implied to him, scorned to apply it to what he regarded as mere collections of dwellings of semi-savages.

His meal, his laver-drops of sacrifice, 955
 Kalchas the seer shall rue ! What is a seer ?
 A man who speaks few truths, but many lies,
 When his shafts hit,—whose ill shots ruin him.
 It is not for the bride's sake—brides untold
 Are eager for mine hand—that this I say. 960
 But King Agamemnon hath insulted me.
 He ought to have asked my name's use first of me
 To trap his child. Chiefly through trust in me
 Did Klytemnestra yield her lord her daughter.
 I had granted this to Greece, if only so 965
 The voyage to Troy might be,—had not refused
 To aid their cause with whom I marched to war.
 But now in yon chief's eyes I am as nought :
 To honour me or shame me is all one !
 Soon shall my sword know—ere it go to Troy 970
 I will distain it with death-dews of blood—
 If any man shall wrest from me thy daughter.
 Calm thee : as some God strong to save I come,
 Though I be none ; yet will I prove me such.

CHORUS.

Thou speakest, son of Peleus, worthily 975
 Of thee, and of the sea-born Goddess dread.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How can I praise thee, and not over-praise,
 And yet not mar the grace by stint thereof ?
 For good men praised do in a manner hate
 The praiser, if he praiseth overmuch.¹ 980

¹ Excessive praise was believed to provoke the Gods' jealousy. Hence no true friend would indulge in it.

I blush to thrust on thee my piteous tale.
 My pain is mine ; mine anguish wrings not thee.
 Yet is it nobly done, when from his height
 The good man stoops to help the stricken ones.
 Pity me, for in piteous case am I, 985
 Who, first, had dreamed that thou shouldst wed my
 child,—
 Vain hope was mine !—next, haply unto thee
 Ill omen for thy bridal yet to come
 Should be my child's death : take thou heed thereof.
 Well spakest thou, the first things as the last. 990
 For, if thou will it, shall my child be saved.
 Wouldst thou she clasped thy knees a suppliant ?
 No maiden's part !—yet, if it seems thee good,
 She shall come, lifting innocent frank eyes.
 But if without her I may win my suit, 995
 In maiden pride let her abide within :
 Yet must “ the possible ” limit modesty.¹

ACHILLES.

Nay, bring not forth thy daughter in my sight,
 Nor, lady, risk we the reproach of fools :
 For this thronged host, of all home-trammels free, 1000
 Loves evil babble of malicious tongues.
 In any wise the same end shall ye gain
 Praying or prayerless ; for one mighty strife
 Waits me,—from evil to deliver you.
 One thing be sure thou hast heard—I will not lie. 1005
 If lie I do, or mock you, may I die,
 And only die not, if I save the maid.

¹ So Hermann, Headlam, and others. Paley, “Yet must thou show her mercy as thou canst.”

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Heaven bless thee, who still succourest the distressed !

ACHILLES.

Now hear me, that the matter well may speed.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What meanest thou ? I needs must list to thee.¹ 1010

ACHILLES.

Let us to a better mood persuade her sire.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

He is something craven—fears o'ermuch the host.

ACHILLES.

Yet mightier wrestler reason is than fear.²

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Cold hope is this : yet say what I must do.

ACHILLES.

Beseech him first to murder not his child. 1015

If he withstand thee, come thou unto me.

For, if he heed thy prayer, I need not stir,

Since in this very yielding is her life ;

And friendlier so to a friend shall I appear.

¹ Or as England punctuates, " What meanest thou that I must hear of thee ? "

² Reading, with England, *φόβους*, instead of the common reading *λόγους*, " Yet argument outwrestleth argument. "

Nor shall the army blame me, if I bring 1020
 This thing to pass by reason, not by force.
 If all go well, upon thy friends and thee
 Shall gladness dawn, and that without mine aid.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah wise words ! I must act as seems thee best.
 But, if we shall not gain mine heart's desire, 1025
 Where shall I see thee ?—whither shall I go
 In misery, to find thy champion hand ?

ACHILLES.

Where best befits will I keep watch for thee,
 That none behold thee traversing wild-eyed
 The Danaan host. Shame not thy father's house ; 1030
 For Tyndareus¹ deserves not to be made
 A mock, for great is he midst Hellene men.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

This shall be. Rule thou—I must be thy thrall.
 If there be Gods, thy righteousness shall find
 Reward : if none there be, what boots to toil ? 1035
[Exeunt severally Ach. and Kly.]

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

O what bridal-chant rang with the crying
 Of the Libyan flute,
 With the footfall of dancers replying
 To the voice of the lute,
 With the thrill of the reeds' glad greeting,

¹ Father of Klytemnestra.

In the day when o'er Pelion fleeting 1040
 Unto Peleus' espousals, with beating
 Of golden-shod foot,
 The beautiful-tressed Song-maidens
 To the Gods' feast came,
 And their bridal-hymn's ravishing cadence
 Bore Thetis's fame
 O'er the hills of the Centaurs far-pealing,
 Through the woodlands of Pelion soft-stealing,
 The new-born splendour revealing
 Of the Aiakid's name!
 And Dardanus' child, whom the pinion 1050
 Of the eagle bore
 From Phrygia, Ganymede, minion
 Of Zeus, did pour
 From the gold's depths nectar ; while dancing
 Feet of the Sea-maids were glancing
 Through circles, through mazes entrancing
 The white sands o'er.

(Ant.)

Leaf-crowned came the Centaur riders
 With their lances of pine
 To the feast of the Heaven-abiders, 1060
 And the bowls of their wine.
 "Hail, Sea-queen!"—so rang their acclaiming—
 "A light over Thessaly flaming"—
 Sang Cheiron, the unborn naming—
 "Thy scion shall shine."
 And, as Phœbus made clearer the vision,
 "He shall pass," sang the seer,
 "Unto Priam's proud land on a mission
 Of fire, with the spear
 And the shield of the Myrmidons, clashing

In gold ; for the Fire-king's crashing
 Forges shall clothe him with flashing
 Warrior-gear :
 Of his mother the gift shall be given,
 Of Thetis brought down."
 So did the Dwellers in Heaven
 With happiness crown
 The espousals of Nereus' Daughter,
 When a bride unto Peleus they brought her
 Of the seed of the Lords of the Water
 Chief in renown.

(Epode.)

1080

But men shall wreathe thine head
 For death, thy golden hair,—
 As heifer white and red
 Down from the hill-caves led,
 A victim pure,—shall stain
 With blood thy throat snow-fair ;
 Though never thou wert bred
 Where with the herdmen's strain
 The reed-pipes thrill the air ;
 But at thy mother's side
 Wast nursed, wast decked a bride
 For a king's heir.
 What might hath now
 Modesty's maiden face
 Or virtue's brow ?—
 When godlessness bears sway,
 And mortals thrust away
 Virtue, and cry " Give place ! "
 When lawlessness hath law down-trod,
 And none will to his brother say
 " Let us beware the jealousy of God ! "

1090

Enter Klytemnestra.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Forth of the tent to seek my lord I come,
Who is from his pavilion absent long ;
And drowned in tears mine hapless daughter is, 1100
With wails now ringing high, now moaning low,¹
Since she hath heard what death her father plots.
Lo, of one even now drawn nigh I spake,
Yon Agamemnon, who shall straightway stand
Convict of sin against his very child. 1105

Enter Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON.

O Leda's child, well met without the tent.
I would speak with thee, ere our daughter come,
Of that which fits not brides to be should hear.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And what is this that fits the time so well ?

AGAMEMNON.

Send forth the tent the maid to join her sire : 1110
For here the lustral waters stand prepared,
And meal for hands to cast on cleansing flame,
And victims² that ere bridals must be slain
To Artemis with spirrings of dark blood.

¹ The original is a musical metaphor, " Uttering lamentations in many variously-pitched keys."

² Lit. " calves ;" but this word is used in poetry for *young girls*: thus the " tragic irony " points to the purpose of slaying the maiden ere any marriage can be celebrated.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Fair sound the things thou nam'st :—but to thy deeds
I know not how to give fair-sounding names. [1115
Daughter, come forth : to the uttermost thou know'st
Thy sire's design. The babe Orestes take,
And bring thy brother folded in thy robes.

Enter Iphigeneia.

Lo, she is here, obedient unto thee. 1120
The rest, for her, for me, myself will speak.

AGAMEMNON.

Child, wherefore weep, and blithely look no more,
But earthward bend thy vesture-shrouded eyes ?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me !
How shall I make beginning of my woes ?
For well may I account each one the first, 1125
Midmost, or last, in misery's tangled web.

AGAMEMNON.

How now ? How find I each and all conspired
To show in each face trouble and amaze ?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Answer my question, husband, like a man.

AGAMEMNON.

No need to bid me : I would fain be asked. 1130

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy child and mine—mean'st thou to murder her ?

AGAMEMNON.

Ha !—

A hideous question !—foul suspicion this !

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Peace !

Render me answer first as touching this.

AGAMEMNON.

To question fair fair answer shalt thou hear.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Nought else I ask, thou answer me nought else. 1135

AGAMEMNON.

O mighty Doom, O Fate, O fortune mine !

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And mine, and hers ! One fate for wretched three.

AGAMEMNON.

Whom have I wronged ?¹

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou—and of me—ask this ?

This wit of thine is utter witlessness !

AGAMEMNON.

Undone am I ! My secret is betrayed ! 1140

¹ Reading much disputed. England, *τί μ' ἠδίκησας*, "Wherefore so wrong me ?" Others, *τίς σ' ἠδίκησε*, "Now who hath wronged thee ?"

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I know all—yea, thy purposed crime have learnt.
 Thy very silence and thy groan on groan
 Are thy confession. Labour not with speech.

AGAMEMNON.

Lo, I am silent. Wherefore utter lies,
 And add unto misfortune shamelessness? 1145

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Give ear now ; for I will unfold my pleas,
 Nor use half-hinting riddles any more.
 First,—that with this I may reproach thee first—
 By force, not of my will, didst thou wed me :
 Thou slewest Tantalus my sometime lord ; 1150
 Didst dash my living babe against the stones,¹
 Even from my breast with violence tearing him.
 Then did the Sons of Zeus, my brethren twain,
 Flashing on white steeds come to war with thee.
 But mine old father Tyndareus begged thy life, 1155
 Who cam'st his suppliant, and thou keptest me.
 So reconciled to thee and to thine house,
 A blameless wife was I,—be witness thou,—
 Chaste in desires, increasing in thine halls
 Thy substance still, so that thine enterings-in 1160
 Were joy, and thine outgoings happiness.
 Rare spoil is this for man to win such spouse :
 Of getting worthless wives there is no lack.
 This son, with daughters three, to thee I bare ;
 And of one wilt thou rob me ruthlessly ! 1165

¹ Reading ζῶν προσοὔδισας πέδῳ.

Now, if one ask thee wherefore thou wilt slay her,
 Speak, what wilt say?—or must I speak for thee?—
 That Helen's lord may win her? Glorious this,
 To pay a wanton's price in children's lives! [1170
 So shall we buy things loathed with things most loved.
 Come, if thou go to war, and leave me here
 At home, and through long absence tarry there,
 With what heart, think'st thou, shall I keep thine
 halls,

When vacant of her I behold each chair,
 Vacant each maiden-bower, and sit me down 1175
 In loneliness of tears, and mourn her ever—
 "O child, he which begat thee murdered thee
 Himself, none other, by none other hand,
 Leaving unto this house such vengeance-debt!"¹—
 Seeing there needeth but faint pretext now 1180
 Whereon both I and thy seed left to thee
 Shall hail thee with such greeting as is meet.
 Nay, by the Gods, constrain not me to turn
 Traitor to thee; nor such be thou to me.

Lo now— [1185
 Thy daughter slain, what prayer wilt thou pray then,
 Implore what blessing, o'er thy murdered child?
 An ill home-coming, since in shame thou goest?
 Were't just that I pray any good for thee?
 O surely must we deem the Gods be fools,
 If we wish blessings upon murderers! 1190
 Wilt thou return to Argos, clasp thy babes?

¹ It would seem that either something has here been interpolated, or something lost. Paley suggests, to connect the sense, and to make 1182 plainer,

"Leaving such recompense due unto thee,
 How wilt thou dare to seek again thine house?"

Oh impious thought ! What child shall meet thy look,
 If thou have given up one of them to death ?
 Hast ta'en account of this ? Or is it thine
 Only to flaunt a sceptre, lead a host ? 1195
 This righteous proffer shouldest thou have made—
 “ Will ye, Achaians, sail to Phrygia-land ?
 E'en then cast lots whose daughter needs must die.”
 This had been fair—not that thou choose thine own
 The Danaans' victim, rather than that he 1200
 Whose quarrel this is, Menelaus, slay
 Hermionê for her mother. Now must I,
 The loyal wife, be of my child bereft,
 While she, the harlot, brings her daughter home
 To dwell in Sparta mid prosperity ! 1205
 Herein if I plead ill, thou answer me :
 But if my words ring true, ah, slay not thou¹
 Thy child and mine, and so shalt thou be wise.

CHORUS.

Heed her ; for good it is thou join to save
 Thy child, Agamemnon : none shall gainsay this. 1210

IPHIGENEIA.

Had I the tongue of Orpheus, O my sire,
 To charm with song the rocks to follow me,
 And witch with eloquence whomsoe'er I would,
 I had essayed it. Now—mine only cunning—
 Tears will I bring, for this is all I can. 1215
 And suppliant will I twine about thy knees
 My body, which this mother bare to thee.

¹ England and Headlam adopt *μετανόει δὴ μὴ κτανεῖν*,
 “repent, slay not.”

Ah, slay me not untimely ! Sweet is light :
Constrain me not to see the nether gloom !
'Twas I first called thee father, thou me child. 1220
'Twas I first throned my body on thy knees,
And gave thee sweet caresses and received.
And this thy word was : " Ah, my little maid,
Blest shall I see thee in a husband's halls
Living and blooming worthily of me ? " 1225
And, as I twined my fingers in thy beard,
Whereto I now cling, thus I answered thee :
" And what of thee ? Shall I greet thy grey hairs,
Father, with loving welcome in mine halls,
Repaying all thy fostering toil for me ? " 1230
I keep remembrance of that converse yet :
Thou hast forgotten, thou wouldst murder me.
Ah no !—by Pelops, by thy father Atreus,
And by this mother, whose first travail-pangs
Now in this second anguish are renewed ! 1235
What part have I in Paris' rape of Helen ?
Why, father, should he for my ruin have come ?
Look on me—give me one glance—oh, one kiss,
That I may keep in death from thee but this
Memorial, if thou heed my pleading not. 1240
Brother, small help canst thou be to thy friends ;
Yet weep with me, yet supplicate thy sire
To slay thy sister not !—some sense of ill
Even in wordless infants is inborn.
Lo, by his silence he implores thee, father— 1245
Have mercy, have compassion on my youth !
Yea, by thy beard we pray thee, loved ones twain,
A nestling one, and one a daughter grown.
In one cry summing all, I *must* prevail !
Sweet, passing sweet, is light for men to see, 1250

The grave's life nothingness ! Who prays to die
Is mad. Ill life o'erpasseth glorious death.¹

CHORUS.

O thou wretch Helen ! Through thee and thy sin
Comes agony on the Atreids and their seed.

AGAMEMNON.

I know what asketh pity, what doth not, 1255
Who love mine own babes : I were madman else.
Awful it is, my wife, to dare this deed,
Yet awful to forbear. I *must* do this !
Mark ye yon countless host with galleys fenced,
And all the brazen-harnessed Hellene kings, 1260
For whom no voyaging is to Ilium's towers,
But by thy blood, as Kalchas saith, the seer,
Nor may we raze Troy's citadel renowned.
A fiery passion maddeneth Hellas' host
To sail in all haste to the aliens' land, 1265
And put an end to rapes of Hellene wives.
My daughters will they slay in Argos—you
And me,—if I annul the Goddess' hest.
Not Menelaus hath enslaved me, child,
Nor yet to serve his pleasure have I come. 1270
'Tis Hellas for whom—will I, will I not—
I must slay thee : this cannot we withstand.
Free must she be, so far as in thee lies,

¹ "Come not unto me with thy babble of comfort in death !
Rather would I be a hireling to drudge in the fields all day
With a landless master, who sparely would feed me, and
niggardly pay,
Than over the hosts of the dead which have died a sceptre
to sway."

And me, child ; nor by aliens' violence
Must sons of Hellas of their wives be spoiled. 1275
[Exit.]

KLYTEMNESTRA.

O child ! O stranger damsels, see !
Woe for thy death ! Alas for me !
Thy father flees, to Hades yielding thee !

IPHIGENEIA.

Alas for me, mother !
One song for us twain
Fate finds us—none other
But this sad strain : 1280
Upon me shall the light and the beams of the sun shine
never again.

O Phrygian glade
Overgloomed by the crest
Of Ida, where laid
In a snow-heaven nest
Was the suckling by Priam cast forth, which he
plucked from the mother's breast,

Yea, left him to lie
Till the death-doom should claim
Paris, whereby 1290
Throughout Troy was his name
Paris of Ida, where fostered a herdman mid kine he
became.

Would God amid fountains
Of foam-silvered sheen

Of the nymphs of the mountains
His home had not been,
Nor where roses and bluebells for Goddesses bloomed
amid watermeads green !

Came the Queen of Beguiling 1300
With love-litten eye
Passion-kindling, and smiling
As for victory nigh ;
Came Pallas in pride of her prowess, and Hera the
Queen of the Sky :

And Hermes was there,
The Herald of Heaven.
So the Strife of Most Fair,
Loathed contest, was striven,
Whereof to me death, but to Danaans glory, O damsels,
was given. 1310

Me the Huntress receiveth
For her firstfruits of prey,
And mine own sire leaveth
His child—doth betray
A daughter most wretched, O mother, my mother, and
fleeth away.

Woe's me to have seen her—
Helen, whose name
Is a bitterness keener
Than words may frame !
She is made to me slaughter and doom, and a father's
deed of shame.

O had Aulis received not
Bronze prowls long embayed ! 1320

O had Troy been reprieved not
While their pine-wings delayed !
O had Zeus never breathed on Euripus the breath that
our voyaging stayed !—

He who tempers his gales
Unto men as he will ;
Some shake out glad sails,
Some in sorrow sit still
Fate-fettered : these speed from the haven, the white
wings of those never fill.

O travail-worn seed 1330
Of the sons of a day !
How Fate hath decreed
Disaster alway !
What burden of anguish did Tyndareus' child on the
Danaans lay !

CHORUS.

I pity thee for this unhappy lot
Found of thee : would thou ne'er hadst come thereon !

IPHIGENEIA.

Mother mine, I see a throng of men that hither hasten
on !

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child, 'tis he for whom thou camest hither, even
Thetis' son.

IPHIGENEIA.

Handmaids, ope to me the doors, that I within may
hide my face ! 1340

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Wherefore flee, my child ?

IPHIGENEIA.

For shame I cannot meet Achilles' gaze.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Wherefore so ?

IPHIGENEIA.

With shame the misery of my bridal crusheth me.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Not in plight for dainty shrinking art thou when 'tis
thus with thee.

Tarry then : no time is this for maiden pride, if we
but may—

Enter Achilles.

ACHILLES.

Hapless woman, child of Leda !—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

True is this that thou dost say. 1345

ACHILLES.

Fearfully the Argives clamour—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What their clamour ?—tell the thing.

ACHILLES.

Touching this thy daughter.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, thy words with evil presage ring !

ACHILLES.

“ Slain she must be ! ” cry they.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Is there none whose words with theirs contend ?

ACHILLES.

Yea, myself in tumult’s peril was,—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What peril, stranger friend ?

ACHILLES.

Even to be stoned with stones.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Since thou hadst fain my daughter spared ? 1350

ACHILLES.

Even so.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

But lay a hand on *thee* ! And who such deed
had dared ?

ACHILLES.

All the Hellenes.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

But with thee was not thy people’s battle-host ?

ACHILLES.

First were these to turn against me,—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh my daughter, we are lost !

ACHILLES.

Taunted me as thrall to marriage.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

And what answer didst thou frame ?

ACHILLES.

“Slay my destined bride,” I said, “ye shall not,”— 1355

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Yea, a righteous claim.

ACHILLES.

“Whom her father promised !”

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Yea, to Argos sent withal to bring.

ACHILLES.

Yet was I outclamoured.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, the rabble is a baneful thing !

ACHILLES.

Yet will I defend thee.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Singly fight against a multitude ?

ACHILLES.

Seest thou these who bear mine armour ?¹

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Blessings on thy dauntless mood !

ACHILLES.

Yea, I shall be blest.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

She shall not now be on the altar laid ? 1360

ACHILLES.

Not while I am living.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How, will any come to seize the maid ?

ACHILLES.

Thousands—and Odysseus leading—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

He, the seed of Sisyphus ?

ACHILLES.

Even he.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Self-bidden, or did all the host appoint it thus ?

¹ Or (Paley), "Arrayed in armour ?"

ACHILLES.

Chosen, and consenting.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Evil choice, for murderous violence !

ACHILLES.

Nay, but I will stay him.

1365

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Would he hale her unconsenting hence ?

ACHILLES.

Yea, and by her golden tresses.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What must then be done of me ?

ACHILLES.

Cling unto thy child.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

If this may save her, slain she shall not be.

ACHILLES.

Ay, and surely unto this it will come.

IPHIGENEIA.

Mother,—to my word
Hearken ye !—against thine husband I behold thee
anger-stirred

Causelessly : 'twere hard for us inevitable doom to
brave. 1370

Meet it is we thank the stranger-hero for his will to
save.

Yet, that he be not reproached of Hellas' host must we
beware ;

So should ruin seize him, and ourselves in no wise
better fare.

Hear the thing that flashed upon me, mother, as I
thought hereon.

Lo, resolved I am to die ; and fain am I that this be
done 1375

Gloriously—that I thrust ignoble craven thoughts
away.

Prithee, mother, this consider with me : mark how well
I say.

Unto me all mighty Hellas looks : I only can bestow
Boons upon her—sailing of her galleys, Phrygia's over-
throw,

Safety for her daughters from barbarians in the days to
come, 1380

That the ravisher no more may snatch them from a
happy home,

When the penalty is paid for Paris' victim, Helen's
shame.

All this great deliverance I in death shall compass, and
my name,

As of one who gave to Hellas freedom, shall be blessing-
crowned.

Must I live, that clutching life with desperate hand I
should be found ? 1385

For the good of Hellenes didst thou bear me, not for
thine alone.

Lo, how countless warriors with the shield before the
bosom thrown,—

Myriads, now the fatherland is wronged, with strenuous
oar in hand,—

All will fear not to encounter foes, to die for Hellas-
land.

And shall all be thwarted, baffled by the life of *one*—
of me? 1390

Where were justice here?—and what can I set forth
for answering plea?

Turn we now to this thing also:—never ought this
man to make

War on all the Argives, no, nor perish—for a *woman's*
sake!

Better than ten thousand women one man is to look on
light.

Lo, if Artemis hath willed to claim my body as her
right, 1395

What, shall I, a helpless mortal woman, thwart the
will divine?

Nay, it cannot be. My body unto Hellas I resign.

Sacrifice me, raze ye Troy; for this through all the
ages is

My memorial: children, marriage, glory—all are mine
in this!

Right it is that Hellenes rule barbarians, not that alien
yoke 1400

Rest on Hellenes, mother. They be bondmen, we be
freeborn folk.

CHORUS.

Noble the part thou playest, maiden, is:

But Fate and Artemis—ill part is theirs!

ACHILLES.

Agamemnon's child, a God came near to bless 1405
Me, could I but have won thee for my bride.
Happy in thee is Hellas, thou in Hellas !
Well saidst thou this, and worthily of our land :
Thou hast turned away from strife with Gods—a thing
Too hard for thee—hast weighed the good Fate spares.
Yet love for thee now thrills me through the more [1410
That I have seen thy nature, noble heart.
Wherefore look to it : thee I fain would serve,
And bear thee home. I chafe, be Thetis witness,
That I should save thee not in battle-shock 1415
With Danaans. Think—a fearful thing is death.

IPHIGENEIA.

I say this,—as one past all hope and fear :—
Suffice that through her beauty Tyndareus' child
Stirs strife and slaughter : but thou, stranger-prince,
Die not for me, nor slay thou any man. 1420
Let me be Hellas' saviour, if I may.

ACHILLES.

O soul heroic !—nought can I say more
Hereto, since fixed thine heart is. Thy resolve
Is noble—why should one say not the truth ?
But yet,—for haply yet thy mood may change,— 1425
That thou mayst know the proffer that I make,
I go, to place my weapons nigh the altar,
Ready to suffer not, but bar, thy death.
Thou mayst, even thou, unto mine offer turn,
When thou beholdest at thy throat the knife. 1430
Thou shalt not through a hasty impulse die.

No, with these arms will I unto the shrine,
And for thy coming thither will I wait.

[*Exit.*

IPHIGENEIA.

Mother, why art thou weeping silently ?

KLYTEMNESTRA.

[1435

Good cause have I, woe's me ! to break mine heart.

IPHIGENEIA.

Forbear, make me not craven ; but this do—

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak : thou shalt have no wrong of me, my child.

IPHIGENEIA.

Shear not for me the tresses of thine hair,
Neither in sable stole array thy form.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

[1440

Why say'st thou this ? When I have lost thee, child!—

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, I am saved. Thy glory shall I be.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How sayest thou ? Must I not mourn thy death ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, nay : no grave-mound shall be heaped for me.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

How then ?—in death is burial not implied ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Zeus' Daughter's altar is my sepulchre. 1445

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child, I will do thy bidding. Thou say'st well.

IPHIGENEIA.

As one blest, benefactor of our Greece.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

What message to thy sisters shall I bear ?

IPHIGENEIA.

Them too array thou not in sable stole.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall I bear them some word of love from thee ? 1450

IPHIGENEIA.

Only " Farewell ! " Orestes rear to man.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Embrace him : for the last time look on him.

IPHIGENEIA (*to Orestes*).

Dearest, thou gav'st us all the help thou couldst !

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Can I do aught at home to pleasure thee ?

IPHIGENEIA.

My father and thine husband hate not thou. 1455

KLYTEMNESTRA.

A fearful course for thy sake must he run !

IPHIGENEIA.

Sore loth, for Hellas' sake, hath he destroyed me.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

By guile unkingly, unworthy Atreus' son !

IPHIGENEIA.

What friend will lead me, ere mine hair be rent ?¹

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I will go with thee—

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, thou say'st not well. 1460

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Grasping thy vesture.

IPHIGENEIA.

Heed me, mother mine—

Tarry : for thee, for me, 'tis better so.

Let one of my sire's henchmen lead me on

To Artemis' meadow, where I shall be slain.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Child, art thou gone ?—

¹ If I do not promptly go of my own accord, they will come to drag me by the hair (l. 1366).

IPHIGENEIA.

I shall return no more. 1465

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Leaving thy mother !

IPHIGENEIA.

As thou seest :—'tis hard.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Hold !—O forsake me not !

IPHIGENEIA.

Nay, shed no tear.

(*Klyt. enters the tent*).

Ye damsels, raise all-hails of happy speed—

The pæan for my lot—to Zeus's child

Artemis. Bid the host keep reverent hush.¹ 1470

Bring maunds of sacrifice, let blaze the flame

With purifying meal ; and let my sire

Compass the altar rightward. Lo, I come

To give to Hellas safety victory-crowned.

Raises the processional chant.

Lead me for Ilium's, Phrygia's, overthrowing : 1475

Give to me garlands, bring festooning flowers :

Lo, my locks wait the blossoms overstrawing,

The lustral laver-showers.

¹ Or, " Let the host hushed hear it rise." Their clamours may have been heard behind the scenes.

To Artemis the Queen, blest Goddess, treading 1480
 A measure, fane and altar compass ye.
 I wash the curse out with the hallowed shedding
 Of blood, if this must be.

Mother, for thee my fount of pity streameth
 Now—for I may not at the altar weep. 1490
 Sing, maidens, Artemis, whose temple gleameth
 Toward Chalkis, o'er the deep,

From where, in Aulis' straitened havens, shaken
 In fury, spears are at my name uptossed.
 Hail, mother-land Pelasgia! Hail, forsaken
 Mycenian home—home lost!

CHORUS.

Dost thou on the city of Perseus cry, 1500
 By the toil of the Cyclopes builded high?

IPHIGENEIA.

For a light unto Hellas thou fosteredst me,
 And I die—O freely I die for thee!

CHORUS.

Yea, for thy glory shall never die.

IPHIGENEIA.

Hail, Light divine!
 Hail, Day in whose hands doth the World's Torch
 shine!

In a strange new life must I dwell,
 And a strange new lot must be mine.
 Farewell, dear light, farewell! [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

See who, for Ilium's, Phrygia's, overthrowing, 1510

With her fair hair for death bestarred with flowers,
Is to the sacrificial altar going
Besprent with laver-showers—

Yea, to the altar of the murder-lover,

To sprinkle it with thine outrushing life,
Whose crimson all thy shapely neck shall cover
Gashed by the fearful knife.

For thee the lustral dews of thy sire's pouring

Wait : the Achaian thousands Troyward strain. 1520
Chant we Zeus' Child, the Huntress-queen adoring ;
For O, thy loss is gain !

Joyer in human blood, to Phrygia's far land

Speed thou the host, to Troy the treason-shore ;
So crown the King, crown Hellas with a garland 1530
Of glory evermore.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Daughter of Tyndareus, Klytemnestra, come
Forth from the tent, that thou mayst hear my tale.

Enter Klytemnestra.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

I heard thy voice, and hitherward I come,
Wretched with horror, all distraught with fear 1535
Lest thou have brought to crown the present woe
Some fresh one.

MESSENGER.

Nay, but fain am I to tell,
Touching thy child, a strange and awesome thing.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

Linger not then, but tell it with all speed.

MESSENGER.

Yea, all, dear mistress, clearly shalt thou learn, 1540
From the beginning told, except my tongue
Through my mind's turmoil falter in the tale.
When to the grove we came of Artemis,
Zeus' child, and to her meadows flower-bestarred,
The place of muster for Achaia's host, 1545
Leading thy child, straightway the Argive throng
Gathered. But when King Agamemnon saw
The maid for slaughter entering the grove,
He heaved a groan, he turned his head away
Weeping, and drew his robe before his eyes. 1550
But to her father's side she came, and stood,
And said, " My father, at thine hest I come,
And for my country's sake my body give,
And for all Hellas, to be led of you
Unto the Goddess' altar, willingly, 1555
And sacrificed, since this is Heaven's decree.
Prosper, so far as rests with me, and win
Victory, and return to fatherland.
Then let no Argive lay a hand on me :
Silent, unflinching, will I yield my neck." 1560
So spake she ; and all marvelled when they heard
The maiden's courage and her heroism.
Forth stood Talthybius then, whose part it was,

Proclaiming silence and a reverent hush.
And the seer Kalchas in a golden maund 1565
Laid down a keen knife which his hand had drawn
Out of its sheath, then crowned the maiden's head.
Then Peleus' son took maund and lustral bowl,
And round the altar of the Goddess ran,
And cried, "Zeus' Daughter, slayer of wild beasts, 1570
Whose wheels of light roll splendours through the
gloom,
Accept this offering which we render thee,
Achaia's host, with Agamemnon King,
The unsullied blood from a fair maiden's neck ;
And grant the galleys voyaging unvexed ; 1575
And grant our spears may spoil the towers of Troy."
With bowed heads Atreus' sons and all the host
Stood. The priest took the knife and spake the prayer,
And scanned her throat for fittest place to strike.
Then through my soul exceeding anguish thrilled : 1580
Mine head drooped :—lo, a sudden miracle !
For each man plainly heard the blow strike home ;
But the maid—none knew whither she had vanished.
Loud cried the priest : all echoed back the cry,
Seeing a portent by some God sent down 1585
Unlooked-for, past belief, albeit seen.
For gasping on the ground there lay a hind
Most huge to see, and passing fair to view,
With whose blood all the Goddess' altar ran.
Then Kalchas cried—how gladly ye may guess :—1590
" O chieftains of this leagued Achaian host,
See ye this victim by the Goddess laid
Before her altar, even a mountain hind ?
This holds she more acceptable than the maid,
That she stain not with noble blood her altar. 1595

Gladly she hath accepted this, and grants
 To us fair voyage and onset upon Troy.
 Be of good cheer then every mariner !
 Hence to the galleys ; for this day must we
 Fleet out of Aulis' hollow bays, and cross 1600
 The Aegean surge." So when the victim all
 Was burnt to ashes in the Fire-god's flame,
 Meet prayer he offered for the host's return.
 Me Agamemnon sped to tell thee this,
 And say what heaven-sent fortune fair he hath, 1605
 What deathless fame through Hellas he hath won.
 Lo, I was there, and speak as one who saw.
 Doubtless thy child was wafted to the Gods.
 Forbear grief, cease from wrath against thy lord.
 Of mortals unforeseen the Gods' ways are, 1610
 And whom they love they save : for this same day
 Dying and living hath beheld thy child.

CHORUS.

How glad I hear the messenger's report !
 He saith thy child bides living midst the Gods.

KLYTEMNESTRA.

O daughter, of what God stolen art thou ? 1615
 How shall I bid farewell to thee ?—how
 Know this for aught but a sweet lie, spoken
 To heal the heart that for thee is broken ?

CHORUS.

Lo there King Agamemnon draweth nigh
 Bearing the selfsame tale to tell to thee. 1620

Enter Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON.

Wife, for our child's fate happy may we be,
For she in truth hath fellowship with Gods.
Now must thou take this weanling little one,
And journey home ; for seaward looks the host.
Farewell :—it shall be long ere thee I greet, 1625
From Troy returning. Be it well with thee.

CHORUS.

Pass, Atreus' scion, to Phrygia's land with joy,
And with joy from the battle-toil come, bearing the
glorious spoil

Of Troy.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE BACCHANALS.

ARGUMENT.

SEMELE the daughter of Kadmus, a mortal bride of Zeus, was persuaded by Hera to pray the God to promise her with an oath to grant her whatsoever she would. And, when he had consented, she asked that he would appear to her in all the splendour of his godhead, even as he visited Hera. Then Zeus, not of his will, but constrained by his oath, appeared to her amidst intolerable light and flashings of heaven's lightning, whereby her mortal body was consumed. But the God snatched her unborn babe from the flames, and hid him in a cleft of his thigh, till the days were accomplished wherein he should be born. And so the child Dionysus sprang from the thigh of Zeus, and was hidden from the jealous malice of Hera till he was grown. Then did he set forth in victorious march through all the earth, bestowing upon men the gift of the vine, and planting his worship everywhere. But the sisters of Semelê scoffed at the story of the heavenly bridegroom, and mocked at the worship of Dionysus. And when Kadmus was now old, Pentheus his grandson reigned in his stead, and he

too defied the Wine-giver, saying that he was no god, and that none in Thebes should ever worship him.

And herein is told how Dionysus came in human guise to Thebes, and filled her women with the Bacchanal possession, and how Pentheus, essaying to withstand him, was punished by strange and awful doom.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DIONYSUS, *the Wine-god, who is called also Bacchus, and Iacchus, and Bromius, the Clamour-king.*

TEIRESIAS, *a prophet, old and blind.*

KADMUS, *formerly king of Thebes.*

PENTHEUS, *king of Thebes, grandson of Kadmus.*

SERVANT *of Pentheus.*

HERDMAN.

MESSENGER, *servant of Pentheus.*

AGAVE, *mother of Pentheus, daughter of Kadmus.*

CHORUS, *consisting of Bacchanals, Asiatic women who have followed Dionysus.*

Guards, attendants.

SCENE :—before the royal palace of Thebes.

THE BACCHANALS.

Enter Dionysus.

DIONYSUS.

I to this land of Thebes have come, Zeus' Son
Dionysus, born erstwhile of Kadmus' child
Semelê, brought by levin-brand to travail.
My shape from God to mortal semblance changed,
I stand by Dirké's springs, Ismenus' flood. 5
I see my thunder-blasted mother's tomb
Here nigh the halls: the ruins of her home
Smoulder with Zeus's flame that liveth yet—
Hera's undying outrage on my mother.
Kadmus doth well, that he ordains this close, 10
His child's grave, hallowed: with the clustering green
Of vines I, even I, embowered it round.

Leaving the gold-abounding Lydian meads
And Phrygian, o'er the Persian's sun-smit tracts,
By Bactrian strongholds, Media's storm-swept land, 15
Still pressing on, by Araby the Blest,
And through all Asia, by the briny sea
Lying with stately-towered cities thronged,
Peopled with Hellenes blent with aliens,
To this of Hellene cities first I come. 20
My dances there and rites have I ordained
That I might be God manifest to men.

So, of all Hellas, Thebes with my acclaim
I first thrilled, there with fawn-skin girt her limbs,
And gave her hand the ivied thyrsus-spear, 25
Because my mother's sisters—shame on them!—
Proclaimed Dionysus never born of Zeus;
But Semelê by a man undone, said they,
Charged upon Zeus her sin of wantonness—
A subtle wile of Kadmus! Hence, they vaunted, 30
Zeus slew the liar who named him paramour.
These therefore frenzy-stung I have driven from home,
And mid the hills with soul distraught they dwell,
The vesture of my revels forced to wear;
And all the woman-seed of Kadmus' folk, 35
Yea all, I drave forth raving from their homes:
And, mingled with the sons of Kadmus, these
'Neath green pines sit on crags all shelterless.
For this Thebes needs must learn, how loth soe'er,
What means it not to be in my great rites 40
Initiate, and that Semelê's cause I plead,
To men God manifest, whom she bare to Zeus.

Now Kadmus gave his crown and royal estate
To Pentheus, of another daughter born,
Who wars with Heaven in me, and from libations 45
Thrusts, nor makes mention of me in his prayers.
Therefore to him my godhead will I prove,
And to all Thebans. To another land
Then, after triumph here, will I depart,
And manifest myself. If Thebes in wrath 50
Take arms to chase her Bacchants from the hills,
Leading my Maenads I will clash in fight.
For this cause have I taken mortal form,
And changed my shape to fashion of a man.

Ho, ye who Lydia's rock-wall, Tmolus, left, 55

Women, my revel-rout, from alien homes
 To share my rest and my wayfaring brought,
 Uplift the cymbals to the Phrygian towns
 Native, great Mother Rhea's device and mine,
 And smite them, compassing yon royal halls 60
 Of Pentheus, so that Kadmus' town may see.
 I to Kithairon's glens will go, where bide
 My Bacchanals, and join the dances there. [*Exit.*]

*Enter Chorus, waving the thyrsus-wands, and clashing
 their timbrels.*

CHORUS.

(*Str. 1*)

From Asian soil
 Far over the hallowed ridges of Tmolus fleeting,
 To the task that I love do I speed, to my painless
 toil
 For the Clamour-king, hailing the Bacchanals' God
 with greeting.

(*Ant. 1*)

Who is there in the way?
 In the dwelling who lingereth? Forth!—and let each
 one, sealing
 His lips from irreverence, hallow them. Now, in the
 lay 70
 Dionysus ordains, will I chant him, his hymn outpealing.

(*Str. 2*)

O happy to whom is the blessedness given
 To be taught in the mysteries sent from heaven,
 Who is pure in his life, through whose soul the
 unsleeping

Revel goes sweeping!

¹ Or (Elmsley and Tyrrell), "Let him hence: in his home
 let him stay."

Made meet by the sacred purifying
 For the Bacchanal rout o'er the mountains flying,
 For the orgies of Cybelê mystery-folden,

Of the Mother olden,

Wreathed with the ivy sprays, 80

The thyrsus on high doth he raise,

Singing the Vine-god's praise—

Come, Bacchanals, come !

The Clamour-king, child of a God,

O'er the mountains of Phrygia who trod,

Unto Hellas's highways broad

Bring him home, bring him home !—

(*Ant.* 2)

The God whom his mother,—when anguish tore her

Of the travail resistless that deathward bore her

On the wings of the thunder of Zeus down-flying,— 90

Brought forth at her dying

An untimely birth, as her spirit departed

Stricken from life by the flame down-darted :

But in birth-bowers new did Zeus Kronion

Receive his scion ;

For, hid in a cleft of his thigh,

By the gold-clasps knit, did he lie

Safe hidden from Hera's eye

Till the Fates' day came ;

Then a God bull-horned Zeus bare, 100

And with serpents entwined his hair :

And for this do his Maenads wear

In their tresses the same.

(*Str.* 3)

Thebes, nursing-town of Semelê, crown

With the ivy thy brows, and be

All bloom, embowered in the starry-flowered

Lush green of the briony,

While the oak and pine thy tresses entwine
In thy bacchanal-ecstasy. 110

And thy fawn-skin flecked, with a fringe be it decked
Of wool white-glistening
In silvery tassels ;—O Bacchus' vassals,
High-tossed let the wild wands swing !
One dancing-band shall be all the land
When, led by the Clamour-king,

His revel-rout fills the hills—the hills
Where thy women abide till he come
Whom the Vine-god chasing, in frenzy racing,
Hunted from shuttle and loom.

(*Ant.* 3)

O cavern that rang when Curetes sang, 120
O bower of the Babe Zeus' birth,
Where the Corybants, dancing with helm-crests
glancing
Through the dark halls under the earth,
This timbrel found whose hide-stretched round
We smite, and its Bacchanal mirth

They blent with the cry ringing sweet and high
From the flutes of the Phrygian land,
And its thunder, soaring o'er revel-shout's roaring,
They gave unto Rhea's hand ;
But the gift passed on from the Mother, won 130
By the madding Satyr-band ;

And to Semelè's child gave the woodfolk wild
The homage he holdeth dear,
When the timbrels clashing to feet white-flashing
Are wedded in each third year.

(Epode)

O trance of rapture, when, reeling aside
From the Bacchanal rout o'er the mountains flying,
One sinks to the earth, and the fawn's flecked hide
Covers him lying
With its sacred vesture, wherein he hath chased 140
The goat to the death for its blood—for the taste
Of the feast raw-reeking, when over the hills
Of Phrygia, of Lydia, the wild feet haste,
And the Clamour-king leads, and our hearts he
thrills
“Evoë!” crying!

Flowing with milk is the ground, and with wine is it
flowing, and flowing
Nectar of bees; and a smoke as of incense of Araby
soars;
And the Bacchanal, lifting the flame of the brand of the
pine ruddy-glowing,
Waveth it wide, and with shouts, from the point of
the wand as it pours,
Challengeth revellers straying, on-racing, on-dancing,
and throwing 150
Loose to the breezes his curls, while clear through
the chorus that roars
Cleaveth his shout,—“On, Bacchanal-rout,
On, Bacchanal maidens, ye glory of Tmolus the hill
gold-welling,
Blend the acclaim of your chant with the timbrels
thunder-knelling,
Glad-pealing the glad God's praises out
With Phrygian cries and the voice of singing,
When upsoareth the sound of the melody-fountain,

Of the hallowed ringing of flutes far-flinging 160
 The notes that chime with the feet that climb
 The pilgrim-path to the mountain ! ”
 And with rapture the Bacchanal onward racing,
 With gambollings fleet
 As of foals round the mares in the meads that are
 grazing,
 Speedeth her feet.

Enter Teiresias.

TEIRESIAS.

Gate-warder, ho ! call Kadmus forth the halls, 170
 Agenor's son, who came from Sidon-town,
 And with towers girded this the Thebans' burg.
 Go, one ; say to him that Teiresias
 Seeks him—he knoweth for what cause I come,
 The old man's covenant with the elder-born 175
 To entwine the thyrsi and the fawnskin don,
 And crown our heads with wreaths of ivy-sprays.

Enter Kadmus.

KADMUS.

Dear friend, within mine house I heard thy voice,
 And knew it, the wise utterance of the wise.
 Ready I come, thus in the God's garb dight. 180
 For him, who is my daughter's very son,
 Dionysus, who to men hath shown his godhead,
 Ought we with all our might to magnify.
 Where shall we dance now, and where plant the foot,
 And toss the silvered head ? Instruct thou me ; 185
 Let eld guide eld, Teiresias : wise art thou.
 I shall not weary, nor by night nor day,
 Smiting on earth the thyrsus. We forget
 For joy our age.

TEIRESIAS.

Thine heart is even as mine.
I too am young, I will essay the dance. 190

KADMUS.

Come, to the mountain fare we, chariot-borne.

TEIRESIAS.

Nay, so were the God's honour minishèd !

KADMUS.

Age ushering age, I will escort thee on.

TEIRESIAS.

We shall not tire ; the God will lead us thither.

KADMUS.

Shall we alone of Thebes to Bacchus dance ? 195

TEIRESIAS.

Yea, we alone are wise ; the rest be fools.

KADMUS.

Too long we linger. Come, grasp thou mine hand.

TEIRESIAS.

Lo there : clasp close the interlinking hand.

KADMUS.

Not I condemn the Gods, I, mortal-born !

TEIRESIAS.

'Tis not for us to reason touching Gods. 200

Traditions of our fathers, old as time,
 We hold : no reasoning shall cast them down,—
 No, though of subtlest wit our wisdom spring.
 Haply shall one say I respect not eld,
 Who ivy-crowned address me to the dance. 205
 Nay, for distinction none the God hath made
 Whether the young or stricken in years must dance :
 From all alike he claims his due of honour ;
 By halves he cares not to be magnified.

KADMUS.

Since thou, Teiresias, seest not this light, 210
 I will for thee be spokesman of thy words.
 Lo to these halls comes Pentheus hastily,
 Echion's son, to whom I gave the throne.
 How wild his mood! What strange thing will he tell?

Enter Pentheus.

PENTHEUS.

It chanced that, sojourning without this land, 215
 I heard of strange misdeeds in this my town,
 How from their homes our women have gone forth
 Feigning a Bacchic rapture, and rove wild
 O'er wooded hills, in dances honouring
 Dionysus, this new God—whoe'er he be. 220
 And midst each revel-rout the wine-bowls stand
 Brimmed : and to lonely nooks, some here, some there,
 They steal, to work with men the deed of shame,
 In pretext Maenad priestesses, forsooth,
 But honouring Aphroditê more than Bacchus. 225
 As many as I have seized my servants keep
 Safe in the common prison manacled.
 But those yet forth, will I hunt from the hills—

Ino, Agavê, who bare me to Echion,
 Autonoê withal, Aktaion's mother. 230
 In toils of iron trapped, full soon shall they
 Cease from this pestilent Bacchic revelling.
 Men say a stranger to the land hath come,
 A juggling sorcerer from Lydia-land,
 With essenced hair in golden tresses tossed, 235
 Wine-flushed, Love's witching graces in his eyes,
 Who with the damsels day and night consorts,
 Making pretence of¹ Evian mysteries.
 If I within these walls but prison him,
 Farewell to thyrsus-taboring,² and to locks 240
 Free-tossed ; for neck from shoulders will I hew.
He saith that Dionysus is a God !
 Saith, he was once sewn up in Zeus's thigh—
 Who, with his mother, was by lightning-flames
 Blasted, because she lied of Zeus's love. 245
 Is not this worthy hanging's awful doom,
 Thus to blaspheme, whoe'er the stranger be ?
 But lo, another marvel this—the seer
 Teiresias, in dappled fawnskins clad !
 Yea, and my mother's sire—O sight for laughter !— 250
 Tossing the reed-wand ! Father, I take shame
 Beholding these grey hairs so sense-bereft.
 Fling off the ivy ; let the thyrsus fall,
 And set thine hand free, O my mother's sire.
 Thou didst,³ Teiresias, draw him on to this : 255
 'Tis thou wouldst foist this new God upon men⁴

¹ Or, " Tempting them with the—" (Paley).

² Drumming on the timbrels with the wand tipped with the pine-cone.

³ Or, " Didst thou . . . and wouldst thou . . . ? " (Paley).

⁴ Insinuating that priests and diviners had an interest in

For augury and divination's wage!
 Except thine hoary hairs protected thee,
 Thou shouldst amid the Bacchanals sit in chains,
 For bringing in these pestilent rites ; for when 260
 In women's feasts the cluster's pride hath part,
 No good, say I, comes of their revelry.

CHORUS.

Blasphemy !—Stranger, dost not reverence heaven,
 Nor Kadmus, sower of the earth-born seed ?
 Son of Echion, thou dost shame thy birth ! 265

TEIRESIAS.

Whene'er a wise man finds a noble theme
 For speech, 'tis easy to be eloquent.
 Thou—roundly runs thy tongue, as thou wert wise ;
 But in these words of thine sense is there none.
 The rash man, armed with power¹ and ready of speech,
 Is a bad citizen, as void of sense. [270
 But this new God, whom thou dost laugh to scorn,
 I cannot speak the greatness whereunto
 In Hellas he shall rise. Two chiefest Powers,
 Prince, among men there are : divine Demeter— 275
 Earth is she, name her by which name thou wilt ;—
 She upon dry food nurtureth mortal men :
 Then followeth Semelê's Son ; to match her gift
 The cluster's flowing draught he found, and gave
 To mortals, which gives rest from grief to men 280

introducing new gods, with their special sacrifices and revelations, as this would bring to them, as the officiating medium, larger fees.

¹ Tyrrell, following Wecklein, reads γλώσση for δυνατός, "The man who is rash of tongue and ready of speech."

Woe-worn, soon as the vine's stream fillet them.
 And sleep, the oblivion of our daily ills,
 He gives—there is none other balm for toils.
 He is the Gods' libation, though a God,
 So that through him do men obtain good things. 285
 And dost thou mock him, as in Zeus's thigh
 Sewn?—I will show thee all the legend's beauty :—
 When Zeus had snatched him from the levin-fire,
 And bare the babe to Olympus, Hera then
 Fain would have cast his godhead out of heaven. 290
 Zeus with a God's wit framed his counterplot.
 A fragment from the earth-enfolding ether,
 He brake, and wrought to a hostage,¹ setting so
 Dionysus safe from Hera's spite. In time
 Men told how he was nursed in Zeus's thigh. 295
 Changing the name, they wrought a myth thereof,
 Because the God was hostage once to Hera.²
 A prophet is this God: the Bacchic frenzy
 And ecstasy are fulfilled of prophecy :
 For, in his fulness when he floods our frame, 300
 He makes his maddened votaries tell the future.
 Somewhat of Ares' dues he shares withal,
 For hosts in harness clad, in ranks arrayed,
 He thrills with panic ere a spear be touched.
 This too is a frenzy Dionysus sends. 305
 Yet shalt thou see him even on Delphi's crags³

¹ *i.e.* Gave this counterfeit Dionysus to Hera, to hold as a hostage, as a guarantee against his investing her rival Semelé's child with the honours of divinity.

² The genuineness of this passage (ll. 286-227) is greatly disputed. The point of the rationalistic derivation lies in the similarity of three Greek words :—*meros*, a fragment; *homēros*, hostage; *ho mēros*, the thigh.

³ Hitherto consecrated to Apollo alone.

With pine-brands leaping o'er the cloven crest,
 Tossing on high and waving Bacchus' bough,—
 Yea, great through Hellas. Pentheus, heed thou me :
 Boast not that naked force hath power o'er men ; 310
 Nor, if it seem so to thy jaundiced eye,
 Deem thyself wise. The God into thy land
 Welcome : spill wine, be bacchant, wreath thine head.
 Dionysus upon women will not thrust
 Chastity : in true womanhood inborn 315
 Dwells temperance touching all things evermore.
 This must thou heed ; for in his Bacchic rites
 The virtuous-hearted shall not be undone.
 Lo, thou art glad when thousands throng thy gates,
 And all Thebes magnifieth Pentheus' name : 320
 He too, I wot, in homage taketh joy.
 I then, and Kadmus, whom thou laugh'st to scorn,
 Will wreath our heads with ivy, and will dance—
 A greybeard pair, yet cannot we but dance.
 Not at thy suasion will I war with Gods ; 325
 For grievous is thy madness, and no spell
 May medicine thee, though spells have made thee mad.¹

CHORUS.

Old sire, thou sham'st not Phœbus in thy speech,
 And wisely honourest Bromius, mighty God.²

¹ This riddling utterance receives perhaps the simplest explanation if we refer the "spells" in l. 327 to the judicial madness, the "possession" inflicted by Bacchus, which could not be removed by any such "spells" (326) as were commonly employed by human exorcists. Pentheus is the Pharaoh of Greek legend, and his heart is represented here as hardened in punishment for his unbelief.

² Implying that Teiresias shows due reverence to the new god without dishonouring the old deity whose prophet he is (Sandys).

KADMUS.

My son, well hath Teiresias counselled thee. 330
 Dwell with us, not without the pale of wont.
 Thou'rt now in cloudland: naught thy wisdom is:
 For, though no God were this,—as thou dost say,—
 God be he called of thee; in glorious fraud
 Be Semelê famed as mother of a God. 335
 So upon all our house shall honour rest.
 Rememberest thou Aktaion's wretched doom,
 Whom the raw-ravening hounds himself had reared
 Rent limb from limb in the meads, for that high boast
 That Artemis in hunting he excelled? 340
 Lest such be thy fate, let me crown thine head
 With ivy: honour thou with us the God.

PENTHEUS.

Hence with thine hand! Go, play the Bacchanal,
 Neither besmurch me with thy folly's stain.
 This seer, thy monitor in senselessness, 345
 Will I chastise. Let some one go with speed—
 (*To an attendant*) Thou, hie thee to his seat of augury;
 Upheave with levers, hurl it to the ground;
 All in confusion turn it upside down;
 His holy fillets fling to wind and storm: 350
 For, doing so, I most shall wring his heart.
 And some range through the city, and track down
 That girl-faced stranger, who upon our wives
 Bringeth strange madness, and defiles our beds.
 And if ye catch him, hale him bound with chains 355
 Hither, that death by stoning be his meed,
 And so he rue his revelry in Thebes.

TEIRESIAS.

Ah wretch, thou knowest not what thou hast said !
 Thou'rt stark-mad now, who erst wast sense-bereft.
 Let us go, Kadmus, and make intercession 360
 Both for this man, brute savage though he be,
 And Thebes, that no strange vengeance of the God
 Smite them. Come with me, ivy-wand in hand,
 Essay to upbear my frame, as I do thine.
 Shame if two greybeards fell!—nay, what of that? 365
 For Bacchus, Son of Zeus, we needs must serve.
 Kadmus, beware lest *Pentheus* bring his echo,¹
Repentance, to thine house :—not prophecy here
 Speaks, but his own deeds. Fools alone speak folly.

[*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

(Str. 1)

O Sanctity, thou who dost bear dominion 370
 Over Gods, yet low as this earthly ground,
 Unto usward, stoopest thy golden pinion,—
 Hear'st thou the words of the king, and the sound
 Of his blast of defiance, of *Pentheus* assailing
 The Clamour-king?—hear'st thou his blasphemous
 railing
 On Semelê's son, who is foremost found
 Of the Blest in the festival beauty-crowned?—
 Who hath for his own prerogative taken
 To summon forth feet through his dances to leap,

¹ The name *Pentheus* suggested to the Greek the word *penthos*, sorrow. Such plays on words are common in the Tragedians. They are not to be regarded as beneath the dignity of tragedy, since the Greeks, like the Hebrews, regarded a man's name as not only foreshowing his destiny, but even as contributing to bring it about. See l. 508.

When blent with the flutes light laughs awaken, 380
 And the children of care have forgotten to weep,
 Whensoever revealed is the cluster's splendour
 In the banquet that men to the high Gods tender,
 And o'er ivy-wreathed revellers drinking deep
 The wine-bowl droppeth the mantle of sleep.

(*Ant.* 1)

Of the reinless lips that will own no master,
 Of the folly o'er law's pale stubborn to stray—
 One is the end of them, even disaster ;
 But the calm life, still as a summer day,
 But the foot whose faring discretion guideth, 390
 Their steadfast state unshaken abideth,
 And the home still findeth in such its stay.
 Ah, the Heavenly Ones dwell far away,
 Yet look they on men from their cloudy portals.
 Ah, not with knowledge is Wisdom bought ;
 And the spirit that soareth too high for mortals
 Shall see few days : whosoever hath caught
 At the things too great for a man's attaining,
 Even blessings assured shall he lose in the gaining.
 Such paths as this, meseemeth, be sought 400
 Of the witless folly that roves distraught.

(*Str.* 2)

O to flee hence unto where Aphroditè
 Doth in Cyprus, the paradise-island, dwell,
 The sea-ringed haunt of the Love-gods mighty
 To weave the soul-enchancing spell,
 Or the fields where untold is the harvest's gold,
 Whereover the seven-mouthed river hath rolled,
 Whereon rain never fell !

But O for the land that in beauty is peerless,¹

¹ Macedonia ; where, at the court of king Archelaus, Euripides composed this play, and where the bacchanalian rites were celebrated with great enthusiasm.

The Pierian haunt where the Muses sing ! 410
 On Olympus the hallowed to stand all fearless
 Thitherward lead me, O Clamour-king !
 O Revel-god, guide where the Graces abide
 And Desire,—where danceth, of no man denied,
 The Bacchanal ring.

(*Ant.* 2)

Our God, the begotten of Zeus, hath pleasure
 In the glee of the feast where his chalices shine ;
 And Peace doth he love, who is giver of treasure,
 Who of Youth is the nursing-mother divine. 420
 On the high, on the low, doth his bounty bestow
 The joyance that maketh an end of woe,
 The joyance of wine.

But he hateth the man that in scorn refuseth
 A life that on pinions of happiness flies
 Through its days and its nights, nor the good part
 chooseth.

Wisely shalt thou from the over-wise
 Hold thee apart : but the faith of the heart 430
 Of the people, that lives in the works of the mart,
 For me shall suffice.

*Re-enter Pentheus. Enter Servant, with attendants,
 bringing Dionysus bound.*

SERVANT.

Pentheus, we come, who have run down this prey
 For which thou sentest us, nor sped in vain. 435
 This wild-beast found we tame : he darted not
 In flight away, but yielded, nothing loth,
 His hands, nor paled, nor changed his cheeks' rose-hue,
 But smiling bade us bind and lead him thence,

And tarried, making easy this my task. 440
 Then shamed I said, "Not, stranger, of my will,
 But by commands of Pentheus, lead I thee."
 The captured Bacchanals thou didst put in ward,
 And in the common prison bind with chains,
 Fled to the meadows are they, loosed from bonds, 445
 And dance and call on Bromius the God.
 The fetters from their feet self-sundered fell;
 Doors, without mortal hand, unbarred themselves.
 Yea, fraught with many marvels this man came
 To Thebes! To thee the rest doth appertain. 450

PENTHEUS.

Let loose his hands.¹ Once taken in the toils,
 He is not so fleet as to escape from me.
 Ha! of thy form thou art not ill-favoured, stranger,
 For woman's tempting—even thy quest at Thebes.
 No wrestler thou, as show thy flowing locks, 455
 Down thy cheeks floating, fraught with all desire;
 And white, from heedful tendance, is thy skin,
 Smit by no sun-shafts, but made wan by shade,
 While thou dost hunt desire with beauty's lure.
 First, tell me of what nation sprung thou art. 460

DIONYSUS.

No high vaunt this—'tis easy to declare:
 Of flowery Tmolus haply thou hast heard.

PENTHEUS.

I know: it compasseth the Sardians' town.

¹ Tyrrell retains manuscript reading *μάλισθε*, "Ye are mad! Once in the toils of these mine hands."

DIONYSUS.

Thence am I : Lydia is my fatherland.

PENTHEUS.

Wherefore to Hellas bringest thou these rites ? 465

DIONYSUS.

Dionysus, Zeus' son, made me initiate.

PENTHEUS.

Lives a Zeus there, who doth beget new gods ?

DIONYSUS.

Nay, the same Zeus who wedded Semelê here.

PENTHEUS.

Dreaming or waking wast thou made his thrall ?

DIONYSUS.

Nay, eye to eye his mysteries he bestowed. 470

PENTHEUS.

Ay, of what fashion be these mysteries ?

DIONYSUS.

'Tis secret, save to the initiate.

PENTHEUS.

What profit bring they to his votaries ?

DIONYSUS.

Thou mayst not hear : yet are they worth thy knowing.

PENTHEUS.

Shrewd counterfeiting, to whet lust to hear ! 475

DIONYSUS.

His rites loathe him that worketh godlessness.

PENTHEUS.

Thou saw'st the God : what fashion was he of ?

DIONYSUS.

As seemed him good : that did not I enjoin.

PENTHEUS.

This too thou hast shrewdly parried, telling nought.

DIONYSUS.

Wise answers seem but folly to a fool. 480

PENTHEUS.

Cam'st thou the first to bring his godhead hither ?

DIONYSUS.

All Asians through these mystic dances tread.

PENTHEUS.

Ay, far less wise be they than Hellene men.

DIONYSUS.

Herein far wiser. Diverse wont is theirs.

PENTHEUS.

By night or day dost thou perform his rites ? 485

DIONYSUS.

Chiefly by night : gloom lends solemnity.

PENTHEUS.

Ay—and for women snares of lewdness too.

DIONYSUS.

In the day too may lewdness be devised.

PENTHEUS.

Now punished must thy vile evasions be.

DIONYSUS.

Ay, and thy folly and impiety. 490

PENTHEUS.

How bold our Bacchant is, in word-fence skilled !

DIONYSUS.

What is my doom ? What vengeance wilt thou wreak ?

PENTHEUS.

Thy dainty tresses first will I cut off.

DIONYSUS.

Hallowed my locks are, fostered for the God.

PENTHEUS.

Next, yield me up this thyrsus from thine hands. 495

DIONYSUS.

Take it thyself. 'Tis Dionysus' wand.

PENTHEUS.

Thy body in my dungeon will I ward.

DIONYSUS.

The God's self shall release me, when I will.

PENTHEUS.

Ay—when mid Bacchanals thou call'st on him!¹

DIONYSUS.

Yea, he is now near, marking this despite. 500

PENTHEUS.

Ay, where?—not unto mine eyes manifest.

DIONYSUS.

Beside me. Thou, the impious, seest him not.

PENTHEUS.

Seize him! This fellow mocketh me and Thebes.

DIONYSUS.

I warn ye—bind not!—Reason's rede to folly.

PENTHEUS.

I bid them bind, who have better right than thou. 505

DIONYSUS.

Thou know'st thy life not, nor thy true self seest.²

¹ *i.e.* Never, as I do not intend that you shall escape to rejoin them.

² Or (οὐδ' ὃ δρᾶς, Reiske, followed by Paley), "Thy life, thy deeds, thyself, thou knowest not."

PENTHEUS.

Pentheus—Agavê's and Echion's son.

DIONYSUS.

Yea, fitly named to be in misery pent.

PENTHEUS.

Away! Enjail him in the horses' stalls
 Hard by, that he may see but murky gloom. 510
 There dance! These women thou hast brought with
 thee,
 Thy crimes' co-workers, I will sell for slaves,
 Or make my weaving-damsels, and so hush
 Their hands from cymbal-clang and smitten drum.

DIONYSUS.

I go. The fate that Fate forbids can ne'er 515
 Touch me. On thee Dionysus shall requite
 These insults—he whose being thou hast denied.
 Outraging me, thou halest him to bonds.

[Exeunt Dionysus guarded, and Pentheus.]

CHORUS.

(Str.)

All hail, Acheloüs' Daughter,¹
 Dirkê the maiden, majestic and blest!—in thy cool-
 welling water 520
 Thou receivedst in old time the offspring of Zeus 'neath
 thy silvery plashing,

¹ The river Acheloüs was in legend the Father of all Greek streams. Dirkê, the sacred fountain of Thebes, is addressed as representing that city.

When Zeus, who begat him, had snatched from the
 levin unquenchably flashing,
 And sealed up the babe in his thigh, and aloud did
 the Father cry,
 "Come! into this, Dithyrambus, the womb of no
 mother, pass thou:—
 By this name unto Thebes I proclaim thee, O God of
 the Bacchanals, now."
 Ah Dirkê, thou thrustest me hence, when I bring thee
 the glorious vision 530
 Of his garlanded revels!—now why am I scouted, dis-
 owned, and abhorred?
 Yet there cometh—I swear by the full-clustered grace
 of the vine Dionysian—
 An hour when thine heart shall accept Dionysus, shall
 hail him thy lord.

(Ant.)

Lo, his earth-born lineage bewrayeth
 Pentheus; the taint of the blood of the dragon of old
 he betrayeth,
 The serpent that came of the seed of the earth-born
 Titan Echion. 540
 It hath made him a grim-visaged monster, and not as
 a mortal's scion,
 But as that fell giant brood that in strife with im-
 mortals stood.
 He is minded to fetter me, Bromius' handmaid, with
 cords straightway:
 He hath prisoned his palace within my companion in
 revel this day,
 Dungeoned in gloom! Son of Zeus, are his deeds of
 thine eye un beholden, 550
 Dionysus?—thy prophets with tyranny wrestling in
 struggle and strain?

Sweep down the slope of Olympus, uptossing thy thyrsus golden :

Come to us, King, and the murderer's insolent fury refrain.

(*Epode*)

Ah, where dost thou linger on Nysa the mother of beasts of the wold,

Waving thy revellers on with thy wand, or where heavenward soar

Crests of Corycia, or haply where far forest-solitudes fold

560

Round the flanks of Olympus, where Orpheus constrained by his minstrelsy-lore

Trees round him adoring to press, and the beasts of the wilderness,

As he harped of yore ?

Thrice-blessèd Pieria-land,

Eviu8 honouresth thee !—lo, he cometh, he cometh, on-leading

His dances with Bacchanal chants, over Axius' flood swift-speeding

He shall pass, he shall marshal the leaping feet in the dance-rings sweeping,

The feet of his Maenad-band.

570

On shall he haste over Lydias the river,

O'er the father of streams, the blessing-giver,

Whose waters fair, as the tale hath told,

O'er the land of the gallant war-steed rolled,

Spread fatness on every hand.

DIONYSUS (*within*).

What ho ! Give heed to my voice, give heed !

Ho, Bacchanal-train, my Bacchanal-train !

(Members of Chorus answer severally.)

CHORUS 1.

What cry was it?—whence did it ring?—'Twas the
voice of mine Evian King!

DIONYSUS (*within*).

What ho! What ho! I call yet again, 580
I, Semelê's offspring, Zeus's seed.

CHORUS 2.

What ho! Our Lord, our Lord! What ho!
Come to our revel-band thou,
Clamour-king, Clamour-king, now!
(*Earthquake*).
Earth-floor, dost thou sway to and fro? O mighty
earthquake-throe!
Ha, swiftly shall Pentheus' hall,
Sore shaken, crash to its fall!

CHORUS 3.

Dionysus within yon halls is his godhead revealing!
With homage adore him.

CHORUS 4.

We bow us before him. 590
(*Earthquake*).
Lo, how the lintels of stone over yonder pillars are
reeling!
Now shall the Clamour-king's triumph-shout through
the halls go pealing.

DIONYSUS (*within*).

Kindle the torch of the levin lurid-red :

*Let the compassing flames round the palace of Pentheus
spread.*

*(A great blaze of light enwraps the palace and the
monument of Semelê.)*

CHORUS 5.

Ha ! dost thou see not the wildfire enwreathed
Round the holy tomb—

Lo, dost thou mark it not well?—

Which Semelê thunder-blasted bequeathed,
Her memorial of doom

By the lightning from Zeus that fell ?

Fling to the earth, ye Maenads, fling 600

Your bodies that tremble with sore dismay !

For he cometh, our King, Zeus' scion, to bring
Yon halls to confusion and disarray.

*Chorus fall on their faces. Enter Dionysus from the
palace.*

DIONYSUS.

Ho, ye Asian women, are ye so distraught with sheer
affright

That ye thus to earth be fallen ? Ye beheld, meseems,
the sight 605

When the house of Pentheus reeled as Bacchus shook
it. Nay, upraise

From the earth your limbs, and banish from your
bodies fear's amaze.

CHORUS.

Hail to thee, to us the mightiest light of Evian revelry !
With what rapture, late so lonely and forlorn, I look on
thee !

DIONYSUS.

Ha, and did your hearts for terror fail you when I
passed within, 610
Deeming I should sink to darkness, caught in Pentheus'
dungeon-gin ?

CHORUS.

Wherefore not ? What shield had I, if thou into mis-
chance shouldst fall ?
Nay, but how didst thou escape, who wast a godless
tyrant's thrall ?

DIONYSUS.

I myself myself delivered, lightly, with nor toil nor
strain.

CHORUS.

Nay, but bound he not thine hands with coiling mesh
of chain on chain ? 615

DIONYSUS.

My derision there I made him, that he deemed he fet-
tered me,
Yet nor touched me, neither grasped me, fed on empty
phantasy.
Nay, a bull beside the stalls he found where he would
pen me fast :
Round the knees and round the hoofs of this he 'gan
his cords to cast,

Breathing fury out, the while the sweat-gouts poured
from every limb, 620
While he gnawed upon his lips—and I beside him
watching him
Calmly at mine ease was sitting. Even then our
Bacchus came,
And as with an earthquake shook the house, and lit a
sudden flame
On his mother's tomb. The king beholding thought
he saw his halls
Flame-enwrapped, and hither, thither, rushed he,
wildly bidding thralls 625
Bring the water. Now was every bondman vainly
toiling there.
Then he let this labour be, as deeming I had 'scaped
the snare :
Straight within the building rushed he, drawing forth
his falchion fell.
Then did Bromius, as to me it seemed—'tis but my
thought I tell,—
Fashion in his halls a wraith: he hurled himself
thereon straightway, 630
Rushed, and stabbed the light-pervaded air, as think-
ing me to slay.
Then did Bacchus bring a new abasement of his pride
to pass ;
For he hurled to earth the building. There it lies, a
ruin-mass,—
Sight to make my bonds full bitter to him ! Now, with
toil outworn,
Letting drop the sword, he falleth fainting. He, the
mortal-born, 635
Dare to brave a God to battle ! Then unhindered
passed I through,

Recking nought of Pentheus : so from forth his halls
I come to you.

But, methinks,—for there within the house a footfall's
sound there is,—

He shall straightway come without. Ha, what shall
he say unto this ?

Lightly shall I bear his bluster, whatsoe'er his fury's
stress ; 640

For it is the wise man's part to rein his wrath in sober-
ness.

Enter Pentheus.

PENTHEUS.

Foul outrage this !—the stranger hath escaped,
Though bound but now in fetters fast as fate.

Ha !

There is the man ! What means this ? How hast
thou 645

Won forth to stand before my very halls ?

DIONYSUS.

Stay there, and let thy fury softly tread.

PENTHEUS.

How hast thou 'scaped thy bonds and comest forth ?

DIONYSUS.

Said I not—or didst hear not ?—" One will free me ? "

PENTHEUS. [650

Who ?—Strange and ever strange thine answers are.

DIONYSUS.

He who makes grow for men the clustered vine.

PENTHEUS.

[Ay—who drives women frenzied from the home !]¹

DIONYSUS.

'Tis Dionysus' glory, this thy scoff.

PENTHEUS (*to attendants*).

I bid ye bar all towers round about.

DIONYSUS.

Why? Cannot Gods pass even over walls?

PENTHEUS.

Wise art thou, wise—save where thou shouldst be
wise. 655

DIONYSUS.

Where most needs wisdom, therein am I wise.
But listen first to yon man, hear his tale
Who with some tidings from the mountains comes.
I will await thee : fear not lest I fly.

Enter Herdman.

HERDMAN.

Pentheus, thou ruler of this Theban land, 660
I from Kithairon come, whence never fail
The glistening silver arrows of the snow.

PENTHEUS.

Bringing what weighty tidings comest thou ?

¹ A line inserted conjecturally, to complete *stichomuthia*.

HERDMAN.

I have seen wild Bacchanals, who from this land
Have darted forth with white feet, frenzy-stung. 665
I come, King, fain to tell to thee and Thebes
What strange, what passing wondrous deeds they do.
Yet would I hear if freely I may tell
Things there beheld, or reef my story's sail.
For, King, I fear thy spirit's hasty mood, 670
Thy passion and thine over-royal wrath.

PENTHEUS.

Say on: of me shalt thou go all unscathed.
For we may not be wroth with honest men.
The direr sounds thy tale of the Bacchanals,
The sterner punishment will I inflict 675
On him who taught our dames this wickedness.

HERDMAN.

Thine herds of pasturing kine were even now
Scaling the steep hill-side, what time the sun
First darted forth his rays to warm the earth,
When lo, I see three Bacchant women-bands,— 680
Autonoë chief of one, of one thy mother
Agavê, and the third band Ino led.
All sleeping lay, with bodies restful-strown;
Some backward leaned on leafy sprays of pine,
Some, with oak-leaves for pillows, on the ground 685
Flung careless;—modestly, not, as thou say'st,
Drunken with wine, amid the sighing of flutes
Hunting desire through woodland shades alone.
Then to her feet sprang in the Bacchanals' midst [690
Thy mother, crying aloud, " Shake from you sleep ! "

When fell our horned kine's lowing on her ear.
They, dashing from their eyelids rosy sleep,
Sprang to their feet, a marvel of grace to see,
Young girls, old matrons, maidens yet unwed. [695
First down their shoulders let they stream their hair :
Then looped they up their fawnskins,—they whose
bands

Had fallen loose,—and girt the dappled fells
Round them with snakes that licked their cheeks the
while.

Some, cradling fawns or wolf-cubs in their arms, [700
Gave to the wild things of their breasts' white milk,—
Young mothers they, who had left their babes, that still
Their breasts were full. Then did they wreathe their
heads

With ivy, oak, and flower-starred briony.
One grasped her thyrsus-staff, and smote the rock,
And forth upleapt a fountain's showering spray : 705
One in earth's bosom planted her reed-wand,
And up therethrough the God a wine-fount sent :
And whoso fain would drink white-foaming draughts
Scarred with their finger-tips the breast of earth,
And milk gushed forth unstinted : dripped the while
Sweet streams of honey from their ivy-staves. [710
Hadst thou been there, thou hadst, beholding this,
With prayer approached the God whom now thou
spurnest.

Then we, thine herdmen and thy shepherds, drew
Together, each with each to hold dispute 715
Touching their awful deeds and marvellous.
And one, a townward truant, ready of speech,
To all cried, " Dwellers on the terraces
Of hallowed mountains, will ye that we chase

From Bacchus' revel Agavê, Pentheus' mother, 720
And do our lord a kindness? " Well, thought we,
He spake, and we in ambush hid ourselves
Mid leaves of copses. At the appointed time
They waved the thyrsus for the revel-rites,
With one voice calling Iacchus, Clamour-king, 725
Zeus' seed. The hills, the wild things all, were thrilled
With ecstasy : nought but shook as on they rushed.
Now nigh to me Agavê chanced to leap,
And forth I sprang as who would seize on her,
Leaving the thicket of mine ambush void. 730
Then shouted she, " What ho, my fleetfoot hounds,
We are chased by these men ! Ho ye, follow me—
Follow, the thyrsus-javelins in your hands ! "
O then we fled, and fleeing scantly 'scaped
The Bacchanals' rending grasp. Down swooped they
then 735
Upon our pasturing kine with swordless hand.
Then hadst thou seen thy mother in her grip
Clutch a deep-uddered heifer bellowing loud :
And others rent the calves in crimson shreds.
Ribbs hadst thou seen and cloven hoofs far hurled 740
This way and that, and flakes of flesh that hung
And dripped all blood-bedabbled 'neath the pines.
Bulls, chafing, lowering fiercely along the horn
Erewhile, were tripped and hurled unto the earth,
Dragged down by countless-clutching maiden hands.
More swiftly was the flesh that lapped their bones [745
Stripped, than thou couldst have closed thy kingly eyes.
On swept they, racing like to soaring birds,
To lowland plains which by Asopus' streams
Bear the rich harvests of the Theban folk,— 750
Hysiae, Erythrae, 'neath Kithairon's scour

Low-nestling,—swooping on them like to foes,
This way and that way hurling all their goods,
Yea, from the houses snatching forth the babes.
Whatso they laid upon their shoulders, clung 755
Unfastened ; nothing to the dark earth fell,—
Nor brass nor iron,—and upon their hair
They carried fire unscorched. The folk, in wrath
To be by Bacchanals pillaged, rushed to arms :
Whereupon, King, was this strange sight to see:— 760
From them the steel-tipt javelin drew not blood,
But they from their hands darting thyrsus-staves
Dealt wound on wound ; and they, the women, turned
To flight men, for some God's hand wrought therein.
Then drew they back to whence their feet had come,
To those same founts the God sent up for them, [765
And washed the gore, while from their cheeks the
snakes
Were licking with their tongues the blood-gouts clean.
Wherefore, whoe'er this God be, O my lord,
Receive him in this city ; for, beside 770
His other might, they tell of him, I hear,
That he gave men the grief-assuaging vine.
When wine is no more found, then Love is not,
Nor any joy beside is left to men.

CHORUS.

Words wherein freedom rings I dread to speak 775
Before the King ; yet shall my thought be voiced :
Dionysus is not less than any God.

PENTHEUS.

Lo, it is on us, kindling like a flame,
The Bacchanal outrage, our reproach through Greece !

We may not dally :—to Electra's gate 780
Go thou ; bid all my warriors that bear shield
To meet me, and all riders of fleet steeds,
And all that shake the buckler, all who twang
The bowstring ; for against the Bacchanals
Forth will we march ; for this should pass all bounds,
To endure of women that we now endure. [785

DIONYSUS.

No whit thou yieldest, though thou hear'st my words,
Pentheus. Yet, though thou dost despite to me,
I warn thee—bear not arms against a God ;
But bide still. Bromius will not brook that thou 790
Shouldst drive his Bacchanals from their revel-hills.

PENTHEUS.

School thou not me ; but, having 'scaped thy bonds,
Content thee : else again I punish thee.

DIONYSUS.

Better slay victims unto him than rage,
Spurning the goads, a mortal 'gainst a God. 795

PENTHEUS.

Victims ?—yea women-victims, fitly slain :
Wild work of slaughter midst Kithairon's glens !

DIONYSUS.

Flee shall ye all ; and shame were this, that shields
Brass-forged from wands of Bacchanals turn back.

PENTHEUS.

This stranger—vainly wrestle we with him : 800
Doing nor suffering will he hold his peace.

DIONYSUS.

Friend, yet this evil may be turned to good.

PENTHEUS.

How?—by becoming my bondwomen's thrall?

DIONYSUS.

I without arms will bring the women hither.

PENTHEUS.

Ha ! here for me thou plottest treachery ! 805

DIONYSUS.

Treachery?—I would save thee by mine art !

PENTHEUS.

Ye have made this covenant, so to revel aye.

DIONYSUS.

Nay : know, this covenant made I with the God.

PENTHEUS (*to attendant*).

Bring forth mine arms !—thou, make an end of speech.

DIONYSUS.

Ho thou ! 810
Wouldst thou behold them camped upon the hills?

PENTHEUS.

Ay—though with sumless gold I bought the sight.

DIONYSUS.

Why on this mighty longing hast thou fallen?

PENTHEUS.

To see them drunk with wine—a bitter sight!

DIONYSUS.

Yet wouldst thou gladly see a bitter sight? 815

PENTHEUS.

Yea, sooth, in silence crouched beneath the pines.

DIONYSUS.

Yet will they track thee, stealthily though thou come.

PENTHEUS.

Openly then!—yea, well hast thou said this.

DIONYSUS.

Shall I then guide thee? Wilt essay the path?

PENTHEUS.

Lead on with speed: I grudge thee all delay!¹ 820

DIONYSUS.

Array thee now in robes of linen fine.

¹ Reading *σού* for *σ' οὖ* (MS.), which would mean, "I grudge not such delay," *i.e.* the postponement of hostilities till the project of espial, which is to ensure their success, be first carried out.

PENTHEUS.

Wherefore? From man shall I to woman turn?

DIONYSUS.

Lest they should kill thee, seeing thee there as man.

PENTHEUS.

Well said—yea, shrewd hast thou been heretofore.

DIONYSUS.

Such science Dionysus taught to me. 825

PENTHEUS.

How then shall thy fair rede become mine act?

DIONYSUS.

I will into thine halls, and robe thee there.

PENTHEUS.

What robe? A woman's?—nay, but I think shame.

DIONYSUS.

Is thy desire to watch the Maenads dead?

PENTHEUS.

In what garb, say'st thou, wouldst thou drape my
form? 830

DIONYSUS.

Thine head with flowing tresses will I tire.

PENTHEUS.

And the next fashion of my vesture—what?

DIONYSUS.

Long robes : and on thine head a coif shall be.

PENTHEUS.

Nought else but these wouldst thou add unto me ?

DIONYSUS.

Thyrsus in hand, and dappled fell of fawn. 835

PENTHEUS.

I cannot drape me in a woman's robe !

DIONYSUS.

Then in the fight with Maenads blood must flow.¹

PENTHEUS.

Ay, true :—first must I go and spy them out.

DIONYSUS.

Sooth, wiser so than hunt thee ills with ills.

PENTHEUS.

Yet, how through Kadmus' city pass unseen ? 840

DIONYSUS.

By lone paths will we go. Myself will guide.

PENTHEUS.

Better were anything than Bacchants' mock.

¹ Implying that it will not be theirs ; but the manuscript reading is uncertain, and it is doubtful if it can bear this or any satisfactory sense. Tyrrell approves Housman's conjecture, *εὐμαθὴς εἶ* : "How ?—be detected ? singly fight yon Maenads ?"

DIONYSUS.

I will pass in, and what befits devise.

PENTHEUS.

So be it. I am resolved : my path is clear.

I go ; for I must needs march sword in hand, 845
Or do according unto thine advice. [*Exit.*]

DIONYSUS.

Women, the man sets foot within the toils.

The Bacchants—and death's penalty—shall he find.

Dionysus, play thy part now ; thou art near :

Let us take vengeance. Craze thou first his brain, 850

Indarting sudden madness. Whole of wit,

Ne'er will he yield to don the woman's robe :

Yet shall he don, driven wide of reason's course.

I long withal to make him Thebes' derision,

In woman-semblance led the city through, 855

After the erstwhile terrors of his threats.

I go, to lay on Pentheus the attire

Which he shall take with him to Hades, slain

By a mother's hands. And he shall know Zeus' son

Dionysus, who hath risen at last a God¹ 860

Most terrible, yet kindest unto men. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Ah, shall my white feet in the dances gleam

The livelong night again ? Ah, shall I there

Float through the Bacchanal's ecstatic dream,

Tossing my neck into the dewy air ?—

¹ Or (Tyrrell) "Who reveals at last a godhead."

Like to a fawn that gambols mid delight
Of pastures green, when she hath left behind
The chasing horror, and hath sped her flight
Past watchers, o'er nets deadly-deftly twined,

Though shouting huntsmen cheer the racing hounds 870
Onward, the while with desperate stress and strain
And bursts of tempest-footed speed she bounds
Far over reaches of the river-plain,

Till sheltering arms of trees around her close,
The twilight of the tresses of the woods ;—
O happy ransomed one, safe hid from foes
Where no man tracks the forest-solitudes !

What wisdom's crown, what guerdon, shines more
glorious

That Gods can give the sons of men, than this—
O'er crests of foes to stretch the hand victorious ? 880
Honour is precious evermore, I wis.

(*Ant.*)

Slowly on-sweepeth, but unerringly,
The might of Heaven, with sternest lessoning
For men who in their own mad fantasy
Exalt their unbelief, and crown it king—

Mortals who dare belittle things divine !
Ah, but the Gods in subtle ambush wait :
On treads the foot of time ; but their design
Is unrelinquished, and the ruthless fate

Quests as a sleuth-hound till it shall have tracked 890
The godless down in that relentless hunt.
We may not, in the heart's thought or the act,
Set us above the law of use and wont.

Little it costs, faith's precious heritage,
 To trust that whatsoe'er from Heaven is sent
 Hath sovereign sway, whate'er through age on age
 Hath gathered sanction by our nature's bent.

What wisdom's crown, what guerdon, shines more
 glorious

That Gods can give the sons of men, than this—
 O'er crests of foes to stretch the hand victorious? 900
 Honour is precious evermore, I wis.

(*Epode*)

Blest who from ravening seas
 Hath 'scaped to haven-peace,
 Blest who hath triumphed in endeavour's toil and throe.
 This man to higher height
 Attains, of wealth, of might,
 Than that; yet myriad hopes in myriad hearts still
 glow:

To fair fruition brought
 Are some, some come to nought: 910
 Happy is he whose bliss from day to day doth grow.

Enter Dionysus.

DIONYSUS.

Thou who dost burn to see forefended things,
 Pentheus, O zealous with an evil zeal,
 Come forth before thine halls: be seen of me
 Womanlike clothed in frenzied Bacchant's garb, 915
 To spy upon thy mother and her troop.

Enter Pentheus.

So!—like a daughter of Kadmus is thy form.

PENTHEUS.

Aha! meseemeth I behold two suns,

A twofold Thebes, our seven-gated burg !
A bull thou seem'st that leadeth on before ; 920
And horns upon thine head have sprouted forth.
How, *wast* thou brute ?—bull art thou verily now !

DIONYSUS.

The God attends us, gracious not ere this,
Leagued with us now : now seest thou as thou shouldst.

PENTHEUS.

Whose semblance bear I ? Have I not the mien 925
Of Ino, or my mother Agavê's port ?

DIONYSUS.

Their very selves I seem to see in thee.
Yet, what ?—this tress hath from his place escaped,
Not as I braided it beneath the coif.

PENTHEUS.

Tossing it forth and back within, in whirls 930
Of Bacchic frenzy, I disordered it.

DIONYSUS.

Nay, I, who have taken thy tire-maiden's part,
Will rearrange it. Come, hold up thine head.

PENTHEUS.

Lo there—thou lay it smooth : to thee I look.

DIONYSUS.

Now is thy girdle loose ; thy garment's folds 935
Droop not below thine ankles evenly.

PENTHEUS.

Yea, by my right foot so, meseems, it is.
To left, true by the sinew hangs the robe.

DIONYSUS.

Me wilt thou surely count thy chiefest friend,
When sight of sober Bacchants cheats thine hopes. 940

PENTHEUS.

This thyrsus—shall I hold it in this hand,
Or this, the more to seem true Bacchanal.

DIONYSUS.

In the right hand, and with the right foot timed
Bear it :—all praise to thy converted heart !

PENTHEUS.

Could I upon my shoulders raise the glens¹ 945
Of Mount Kithairon, yea, and the Bacchanals ?

DIONYSUS.

Thou mightest, an thou wouldst : erewhile thy soul
Was warped ; but now 'tis even as befits.

PENTHEUS.

With levers ?—or shall mine hands tear it up
With arm or shoulder thrust beneath its crests ? 950

¹ Among signs of incipient madness is a failure to discriminate resistance, so that the patient, while raising slight weights, (here, the thyrsus), imagines himself to be putting forth strength enough to raise enormous ones.

DIONYSUS.

Now nay—the shrines of Nymphs destroy not thou,
And haunts of Pan that with his piping ring.

PENTHEUS.

True—true : we must not overcome by force
The women. I will hide me midst the pines.

DIONYSUS.

Such hiding shall be thine as fate ordains,¹ 955
Who com'st with guile, a spy on Bacchanals.

PENTHEUS.

Methinks I see them mid the copses caught,
Like birds, in toils of their sweet dalliance.

DIONYSUS.

To this end then art thou appointed watchman :
Perchance shalt catch them—if they catch not thee. 960

PENTHEUS.

On through the midst of Thebes' town usher me,
For I, I only of them, dare such deed.

DIONYSUS.

Alone for Thebes thou travailest, thou alone ;
Wherefore for thee wait tug and strain foredoomed.
Follow : all safely will I usher thee. 965
Another thence shall bring thee,—

¹ Henceforth the dialogue is all Tragic Irony, the words of Dionysus bearing one meaning for Pentheus, and another for the audience.

PENTHEUS.

Ay, my mother.

DIONYSUS.

To all men manifest—

PENTHEUS.

For this I come.

DIONYSUS.

High-borne shalt thou return—

PENTHEUS.

O silken ease !

DIONYSUS.

On a mother's hands.

PENTHEUS.

Thou wouldst thrust pomp on me !

DIONYSUS.

Nay, 'tis but such pomp—

PENTHEUS.

As is my desert. 970

DIONYSUS.

Strange, strange man ! Strange shall thine experience
be.

So shalt thou win renown that soars to heaven.

[*Exit Pentheus.*]

Agavê, stretch forth hands ; ye sisters, stretch,
 Daughters of Kadmus ! To a mighty strife
 I bring this prince. The victor I shall be 975
 And Bromius. All else shall the issue show. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Up, ye swift hell-hounds of Madness ! Away to the
 mountain-glens, where
 Kadmus's daughters hold revel, and sting them to fury,
 to tear

Him who hath come woman-vestured to spy on the
 Bacchanals there,

Frenzy-struck fool that he is !—for his mother shall
 foremost descry 980

Him, as from water-worn scaur or from storm-riven
 tree he would spy

That which they do, and her shout to the Maenads
 shall peal from on high :—

“ Who hath come hither, hath trodden the paths to the
 mountain that lead,

Spying on Kadmus's daughters, the maids o'er the
 mountains that speed,

Bacchanal-sisters ?—what mother hath brought to the
 birth such a seed ?

Who was it ?—who ?—for I ween he was born not of
 womankind's blood :

Rather he sprang from the womb of a lioness, scourge
 of the wood ;

Haply is spawn of the Gorgons of Libya, the demon-
 brood.” 990

Justice, draw nigh us, draw nigh, with the sword of
avenging appear :

Slay the unrighteous, the seed of Echion the earth-
born, and shear

Clean through his throat, for he feareth not God,
neither law doth he fear.

(*Ant.*)

Lo, how in impious mood, and with lawless intent, and
with spite

Madness-distraught, with thy rites and thy mother's he
cometh to fight,

Bacchus—to bear the invincible down by his impotent
might !

1000

Thus shall one gain him a sorrowless life, if he keepeth
his soul

Sober in spirit, and swift in obedience to heaven's con-
trol,

Murmuring not, neither pressing beyond his mortality's
goal.

No such presumptuous wisdom I covet : I seek for
mine own—

Yea, in the quest is mine happiness—things that not so
may be known,

Glorious wisdom and great, from the days everlasting
forth-shown,

Even to fashion in pureness my life and in holiness aye,
Following ends that are noble from dawn to the death
of the day,

Honouring Gods, and refusing to walk in injustice's
way.

1010

Justice, draw nigh us, draw nigh, with the sword of
avenging appear :

Slay the unrighteous, the seed of Echion the earth-
born, and shear

Clean through his throat ; for he feareth not God,
neither law doth he fear.

(*Epode*)

O Dionysus, reveal thee !—appear as a bull to behold,
Or be thou seen as a dragon, a monster of heads mani-
fold,

Or as a lion, with splendours of flame round the limbs
of him rolled.

Come to us, Bacchus, and smiling in mockery compass
him round 1020

Now with the toils of destruction, and so shall the
hunter be bound,

Trapped mid the throng of the Maenads, the quarry
his questing hath found.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

O house of old through Hellas prosperous 1025
Of that Sidonian patriarch, who sowed
The earth-born serpent's dragon-teeth in earth,
How I bemoan thee ! What though thrall I be,
Their lords' calamities touch loyal thralls.

CHORUS.

What now ?—hast tidings of the Bacchanals ? 1030

MESSENGER.

Pentheus is dead : Echion's son is dead.

CHORUS.

Bromius my King! thou hast made thy godhead plain!

MESSENGER.

How, what is this thou say'st? Dost thou exult,
Woman, upon my lord's calamities?

CHORUS.

An alien I, I chant glad outland strain, 1035
Who cower no more in terror of the chain.

MESSENGER.

Deemest thou Thebes so void of men—¹

CHORUS.

Dionysus it is, 'tis the King of the Vine
That hath lordship o'er me, no Thebes of thine!

MESSENGER.

This might be pardoned, save that base it is,
Women, to joy o'er evils past recall. 1040

CHORUS.

Tell to me, tell,—by what doom died he,
The villain devising villainy?

¹ To preserve the symmetry of the dialogue, the messenger should speak a distich: accordingly Paley suggests, to supply the lacuna—

“that ill
Have left her powerless all to punish thee?”

MESSENGER.

When, from the homesteads of this Theban land
Departing, we had crossed Asopus' streams,
Then we began to breast Kithairon's steep, 1045
Pentheus and I,—for to my lord I clave,—
And he who ushered us unto the scene.
First in a grassy dell we sat us down
With footfall hushed and tongues refrained from speech,
That so we might behold, all unbeheld. 1050
There was a glen crag-walled, with rills o'erstreamed,
Closed in with pine-shade, where the Maenad girls
Sat with hands busied with their blithesome toils.
The faded thyrsus some with ivy-sprays
Twined, till its tendril-tresses waved again : 1055
Others, like colts from carven wain-yokes loosed,
Re-echoed each to each the Bacchic chant.
But hapless Pentheus, seeing ill the throng
Of women, spake thus : “ Stranger, where we stand,
Are these mock-maenad maids beyond my ken. 1060
Some knoll or pine high-crested let me climb,
And I shall see the Maenads' lewdness well.”
A marvel then I saw the stranger do.
A soaring pine-branch by the top he caught,
And dragged down—down—still down to the dark
earth. 1065
Arched as a bow it grew, or curving wheel
That on the lathe sweeps out its circle's round :
So bowed the stranger's hands that mountain-branch,
And bent to earth—a deed past mortal might !
Then Pentheus on the pine-boughs seated he, 1070
And let the branch rise, sliding through his hands
Gently, with heedful care to unseat him not.

High up into the heights of air it soared,
Bearing my master throned upon its crest,
More by the Maenads seen than seeing them. 1075
For scarce high-lifted was he manifest,
When lo, the stranger might no more be seen ;
And fell from heaven a voice—the voice, most like,
Of Dionysus,—crying, “ O ye maids,
I bring him who would mock at you and me, 1080
And at my rites. Take vengeance on him ye ! ”
Even as he cried, up heavenward, down to earth,
He flashed a pillar-splendour of awful flame.
Hushed was the welkin : that fair grassy glen [1085
Held hushed its leaves ; no wild thing’s cry was heard.
But they, whose ears not clearly caught the sound,
Sprang up, and shot keen glances right and left.
Again he cried his hest : then Kadmus’ daughters
Knew certainly the Bacchic God’s command,
And darted : and the swiftness of their feet 1090
Was as of doves in onward-straining race—
His mother Agavê and her sisters twain,
And all the Bacchanals. Through torrent gorge,
O’er boulders, leapt they, with the God’s breath mad.
When seated on the pine they saw my lord, 1095
First torrent-stones with might and main they hurled,
Scaling a rock, their counter-bastion,
And javelined him with branches of the pine :
And others shot their thyrsi through the air
At Pentheus—woeful mark !—yet nought availed. 1100
For, at a height above their fury’s pitch,
Trapped in despair’s gin, horror-struck he sat.
Last, oak-limbs from their trunks they thundered down,
And heaved at the roots with levers—not of iron.
But when they won no end of toil and strain, 1105

Agavê cried, "Ho, stand we round the trunk,
 Maenads, and grasp, that we may catch the beast
 Crouched there, that he may not proclaim abroad
 Our God's mysterious rites!" Their countless hands
 Set they unto the pine, tore from the soil:— 1110
 And he, high-seated, crashed down from his height:
 And earthward fell with frenzy of shriek on shriek
 Pentheus, for now he knew his doom at hand.
 His mother first, priest-like, began the slaughter,
 And fell on him: but from his hair the coif 1115
 He tore, that she might know and slay him not,—
 Hapless Agavê!—and he touched her cheek,
 Crying, "'Tis I—O mother!—thine own son
 Pentheus—thou bar'st me in Echion's halls!
 Have mercy, O my mother!—for my sin 1120
 Murder not thou thy son—thy very son!"
 But she, with foaming lips and eyes that rolled
 Wildly, and reckless madness-clouded soul,
 Possessed of Bacchus, gave no heed to him;
 But his left arm she clutched in both her hands, 1125
 And set against the wretch's ribs her foot,
 And tore his shoulder out—not by her strength,
 But the God made it easy to her hands.
 And Ino laboured on the other side,
 Rending his flesh: Autonoë pressed on—all 1130
 The Bacchanal throng. One awful blended cry
 Rose—the king's screams while life was yet in him,
 And triumph-yells from them. One bare an arm,
 One a foot sandal-shod. His ribs were stripped
 In mangled shreds:¹ with blood-bedabbled hands 1135
 Each to and fro was tossing Pentheus' flesh.

¹ Others, "by rending nails."

Wide-sundered lies his corse : part 'neath rough rocks,
 Part mid the tangled depths of forest-shades :—
 Hard were the search. His miserable head
 Which in her hands his mother chanced to seize, 1140
 Impaled upon her thyrsus-point she bears,
 Like mountain-lion's, through Kithairon's midst,
 Leaving her sisters in their Maenad dance ;
 And, in her ghastly quarry exulting, comes
 Within these walls, to Bacchus crying aloud, 1145
 Her fellow-hunter, helper in the chase
 Triumphant—all its triumph-prize is tears !
 But from this sight of misery will I
 Depart, or ever Agavê reach the halls.
 Ay, self-restraint, and reverence for the Gods 1150
 Are best, I ween ; 'tis wisest far for men
 To get these in possession, and cleave thereto. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS.

Raise we to Bacchus the choral acclaim,
 Shout we aloud for the fall
 Of the king, of the blood of the Serpent who came,
 Who arrayed him in woman's pall ;
 And the thyrsus-ferule he grasped—but the same
 Was a passport to Hades' hall :¹
 And a bull was his guide to a doom of shame !
 O Bacchanal-maids Kadmeian, 1160
 Ye have gained for you glory²—a victory-pæan
 To be drowned in lamenting and weeping.
 O contest triumphantly won, when a mother in blood
 of her son
 Her fingers is steeping !

¹ Following Reid and Tyrrell.

² Or, retaining manuscript reading, "She hath won for her."

But lo, I see fast hurrying to the halls 1165
 Agavê, Pentheus' mother, with wild eyes
 Rolling :—hail ye the revel of our God !

Enter Agavê, carrying the head of Pentheus.

AGAVE.

(*Str.*)

Asian Bacchanals !

CHORUS.

Why dost thou challenge me ?—say.

AGAVE.

Lo, from the mountain-side I bear
 A newly-severed ivy-spray 1170
 Unto our halls, a goodly prey.

CHORUS.

I see—to our revels I welcome thee.

AGAVE.

I trapped him, I, with never a snare !
 'Tis a lion—the whelp of a lion, plain to see.

CHORUS.

Where in the wilderness, where ?

AGAVE.

Kithairon—

CHORUS.

What hath Kithairon wrought ?

AGAVE.

Him hath Kithairon to slaughter brought.

CHORUS.

Who was it smote him first ?

AGAVE.

Mine, mine is the guerdon.

Their revel-rout singeth me—" Happy Agavè ! " their
burden. 1180

CHORUS.

Who then ?

AGAVE.

Of Kadmus—

CHORUS.

Of Kadmus what wilt thou tell ?

AGAVE.

His daughter after me smote the monster fell—

After me ! O fortunate hunting ! Is it not well ?¹

(*Ant.*)

Now share in the banquet !—

CHORUS.

Alas ! wherein shall I share ?

AGAVE.

This whelp is yet but a tender thing,

And over its jaws yet sprouteth fair

The down 'neath the crest of its waving hair.

¹ Reading *εὐτυχίης γ' ἂν ἄγχα*, and assigning to Agavè.

CHORUS.

Yea, the hair of a beast of the wold might it be.

AGAVE.

Uproused was the Maenad gathering
To the chase, by a cunning hunter full cunningly. 1190

CHORUS.

Yea, a hunter is Bacchus our King.

AGAVE.

Dost thou praise me ?

CHORUS.

How can I choose but praise ?

AGAVE.

Ay, and full soon shall Kadmus' race—

CHORUS.

And Pentheus thy son—

AGAVE.

Yea, I shall have praise of my scion
For the prey that is taken, even this whelp of a lion.

CHORUS.

Strange quarry !—

AGAVE.

And strangely taken.

CHORUS.

Art glad?

AGAVE.

I am fain

For the triumph achieved, both goodly and great, and
plain

For the land to see, in the booty mine hands have ta'en.

CHORUS.

Show forth now, hapless one, to all the folk 1200
The triumph-spoil that hither thou hast brought.

AGAVE.

Ye, in the fair-towered burg of Theban land
Which dwell, draw nigh to look upon this prey,
The beast we, Kadmus' daughters, hunted down—
Not with the thong-whirled darts of Thessaly, 1205
Neither with nets, but with the fingers white
Of our own hands. What boots the idle vaunt
Of men who get them tools by armourers wrought,
When we, with bare hands only, took the prey,
And rent asunder all the monster's limbs? 1210
Where is mine ancient sire? Let him draw near.
And my son Pentheus where? Let him upraise
A ladder's stair against the palace wall,
That to the triglyphs he may nail this head,
This lion's head that I from hunting bring. 1215

Enter Kadmus, with attendants carrying a bier.

KADMUS.

Follow me, henchmen, to the palace-front;
Follow me, bearing Pentheus' ghastly load,

Whose limbs by toilsome searchings manifold,
 About Kithairon's glens all rent apart
 I found, and bring—no twain in one place found, 1220
 But lying all about the trackless wood.
 For of my daughters' desperate deeds I heard,
 Even as I passed within the city-walls
 With old Teiresias from the Bacchant revel.
 Back to the mountain turned I ; and I bring 1225
 My son thence, who by Maenads hath been slain.
 There her who bore Aktaion to Aristaius
 I saw, Autonoe, saw Ino there
 Still midst the oak-groves, wretches frenzy-stung.
 But hitherward, said one, with Bacchant feet 1230
 Had passed Agavê, and the truth I heard :
 For I behold her—sight of misery !

AGAVE.

My father, proudest boast is thine to make,
 To have begotten daughters best by far
 Of mortals—all thy daughters, chiefly me, 1235
 Me who left loom and shuttle, and pressed on
 To high emprise, to hunt beasts with mine hands.
 And in mine arms I bring, thou seest, this
 The prize I took, against thy palace-wall
 To hang : receive it, father, in thine hands. 1240
 And now, triumphant in mine hunting's spoil,
 Bid to a feast thy friends ; for blest art thou,
 Blest verily, since we have achieved such deeds.

KADMUS.

O anguish measureless that blasts the sight !
 O murder compassed by these wretched hands ! 1245
 Fair victim this to cast before the Gods,

And bid to such a banquet Thebes and me !
 Woe for our sorrows !—first for thine, then mine !
 How hath the God, King Bromius, ruined us !—
 Just stroke—yet ruthless—is he not our kin ? 1250

AGAVE.

How sour of mood is greybeard eld in men,
 How sullen-eyed ! Framed in his mother's mould
 A mighty hunter may my son become,
 When with the Theban youths he speedeth forth
 Questing the quarry !—But he can do nought 1255
 Save war with Gods ! Father, our part it is
 To warn him not to joy in baneful wisdom.
 Where is he ? Who will call him hitherward
 To see me, and behold mine happiness ?

KADMUS.

Alas ! when ye are ware what ye have done, 1260
 With sore grief shall ye grieve ! If to life's end
 Ye should abide on aye in this your state,
 Ye should not, though unblest, seem all accurst.

AGAVE.

What is not well here ?—what that calls for grief ?

KADMUS.

First cast thou up thine eye to yonder heaven. 1265

AGAVE.

Lo, so I do. Why bid me look thereon ?

KADMUS.

Seems it the same ? Or hath it changed to thee ?

AGAVE.

Brighter it is—more clear than heretofore.

KADMUS.

Is this delirium tossing yet thy soul?

AGAVE.

This comprehend I not :—yet—yet—it passes, 1270
My late mood—I am coming to myself.

KADMUS.

Canst hearken aught then? Clearly canst reply?

AGAVE.

Our words late-spoken—father, I forget them.

KADMUS.

To what house camest thou with bridal-hymns?¹

AGAVE.

Echion's—of the Dragon-seed, men say. 1275

KADMUS.

Thou barest—in thine halls, to thy lord—whom?

AGAVE.

Pentheus—born of my union with his sire.

¹ One of the many touches by which Euripides reminds us that the ancients had studied to some purpose the pathology of mental disorders. He begins the process of restoring the broken links of her memory by going back to what can most surely be counted on in the old, the memories of youth.

KADMUS.

Whose head—*whose*?—art thou bearing in thine arms?

AGAVE.

A lion's—so said they which hunted it.

KADMUS.

Look well thereon :—small trouble this, to look. 1280

AGAVE.

Ah-h! *what* do I see? What bear I in mine hands?

KADMUS.

Gaze, gaze on it, and be thou certified.

AGAVE.

I see—mine uttermost anguish! Woe is me!

KADMUS.

Seems it to thee now like a lion's head?

AGAVE.

[1285

No!—wretched!—wretched!—Pentheus' head I hold!

KADMUS.

Of me bewailed ere recognised of thee.

AGAVE.

Who murdered him? How came he to mine hands?

KADMUS.

O piteous truth that so untimely dawns!

AGAVE.

Speak! Hard my heart beats, waiting for its doom.

KADMUS.

Thou!—thou, and those thy sisters murdered him. 1290

AGAVE.

Where perished he?—at home, or in what place?

KADMUS.

There, where Aktaion erst by hounds was torn.

AGAVE.

How to Kithairon went this hapless one?

KADMUS.

To mock the God and thy wild rites he went.

AGAVE.

But we—for what cause thither journeyed we? 1295

KADMUS.

Ye were distraught: all Thebes went Bacchant-wild.

AGAVE.

Dionysus ruined us! I see it now.

KADMUS.

Ye flouted him, would not believe him God.

AGAVE.

Where, father, is my son's belovèd corse?

KADMUS.

Here do I bear it, by hard searching found. 1300

AGAVE.

Is it all meetly fitted limb to limb ?

KADMUS.

[Yea—now I add thereto this dear-loved head.]¹

AGAVE.

But—in my folly what was Pentheus' part ?

KADMUS.

He was as ye, revering not the God,
 Who therefore in one mischief whelmed you all,
 You, and this prince, so ruining all our house 1305
 And me, who had no manchild of mine own,
 Who see now, wretched daughter, this the fruit
 Of thy womb horribly and foully slain.
 To thee our house looked up, O son, the stay
 Of mine old halls ; my daughter's offspring thou, 1310
 Thou wast the city's dread : was none dared mock
 The old man, none that turned his eyes on thee,
 O gallant head !—thou hadst well requited him.
 Now from mine halls shall I in shame be cast—
 Kadmus the great, who sowed the seed of Thebes, 1315
 And reaped the goodliest harvest of the world.
 O best-beloved !—for, though thou be no more,
 Thou shalt be counted best-beloved, O child,
 Thou who shalt fondle never more my head,

¹ A line inserted conjecturally, to fill *lacuna*.

Nor clasp and call me "Mother's father," child, 1320
 Crying, "Who wrongs thee, ancient?—flouts thee who?
 Who vexeth thee to trouble thine heart's peace?
 Speak, that I may chastise the wrong, my sire."
 Now am I anguish-stricken, wretched thou,
 Woeful thy mother, and her sisters wretched! 1325
 If any man there be that scorns the Gods,
 This man's death let him note, and so believe.

CHORUS.

Kadmus, for thee I grieve. Thy daughter's son
 Hath but just doom—yet bitter doom for thee.

AGAVE.

[1330]

Father, thou seest what change hath passed o'er me—

[A large portion of the play has here been lost, containing (1) the lament of Agavê over her son; (2) a few lines, probably by the Chorus, announcing the appearance, in his shape as a God, of Dionysus; (3) the commencement of Dionysus' speech, in which he points out how Pentheus' sin has proved his destruction, how Agavê and her sisters have, by their unbelief, involved themselves in his punishment, and will be exiles till death; and how Kadmus himself must suffer with his house, how he shall wander exiled from Hellas,—the portion preserved commencing with the prophecy of his weird transformation.]¹

DIONYSUS.

—Thou to a serpent shalt be changed: thy wife
 Harmonia, Ares' child, whom thou didst wed
 When man, embruted shall to a snake be changed.
 Thou with thy wife shalt drive a wain of steers

¹ For preserved fragments of this lost portion, see *Appendix* which follows this play.

Leading barbaric hordes, Zeus' oracle saith, 1335
And many a city with thy countless host
Shalt sack: but when they plunder Loxias' shrine,
Then shall they get them bitter home-return.
Thee and Harmonia shall Ares save,
And stablish in the Blessèd Land your lives. 1340
This say I, of no mortal father born,
Dionysus, but of Zeus. Had ye but learnt
Wisdom, what time ye would not, ye had been
Blest now, with Zeus' son for your champion gained.

AGAVE.

Dionysus, we beseech thee!—we have sinned. 1345

DIONYSUS.

Too late ye know me, who knew not in your hour.

AGAVE.

We know it: but thy vengeance passeth bounds.

DIONYSUS.

I am a God: ye did despite to me.

AGAVE.

It fits not that in wrath Gods be as men.

DIONYSUS.

Long since my father Zeus ordained this so. 1350

AGAVE.

Alas! our woeful exile's doom is sealed!

DIONYSUS.

Why then delay the fate that needs must be ? *[Exit.*

KADMUS.

Daughter, to what dread misery are we come,
 Thou—woe is thee !—thy sisters, and thy son !
 I must in sorrow visit alien men,
 A grey-haired sojourner. I am doomed withal 1355
 On Greeks to lead a mingled alien host ;
 And Ares' child, Harmonia my wife,
 In serpent form shall I, a serpent, lead
 Against our Hellas' altars and her tombs,
 Captaining spears. And I shall find no rest 1360
 From woes, alas ! nor that down-rushing stream
 Of Acheron shall I cross and be at peace !

AGAVE.

Robbed of thee, father, exiled shall I be !

KADMUS.

Why cast thine arms about me, hapless child ?
 Like white swan cherishing its helpless sire ? 1365

AGAVE.

Whither can I turn, outcast from my land ?

KADMUS.

I know not, child. Small help thy father is.

AGAVE.

Farewell, mine home ; farewell, ye city-towers
 Of fatherland ! In anguish of despair
 I pass an exile from my bridal bowers. 1370

KADMUS.

Child, to the halls of Aristaius fare :
Abide thou there.

AGAVE.

I mourn thee, father !

KADMUS.

Child, I mourn for thee ;
And for thy sisters do I weep withal.

AGAVE.

For Dionysus' tyrannous majesty
Most fearfully hath caused upon thine hall
This shame to fall.

KADMUS.

Yea, outrage foul to him of you was done,
In that his name in Thebes was held in scorn.

AGAVE.

Farewell, my father.

KADMUS.

Farewell, hapless one, [1380
Daughter !—ah, hardly shalt thou reach such bourn !¹

AGAVE.

O ye, to my sisters guide me,
My companions in banishment's misery.
O that afar I might hide me
Where accursèd Kithairon shall look not on me,

¹ *i.e.* As to *fare well*.

Neither I with mine eyes shall Kithairon see,
Where memorial is none of the thyrsus-spear!
Be these unto other Bacchanals dear.

CHORUS.

O the works of the Gods—in manifold wise they reveal
them :

Manifold things unhopèd-for the Gods to accomplish-
ment bring.

And the things that we looked for, the Gods deign not
to fulfil them ;

1390

And the paths undiscerned of our eyes, the Gods un-
seal them.

So fell this marvellous thing.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

APPENDIX TO THE "BACCHANALS."

A FEW fragments, given below, of the lost portion of the *Bacchæ* have been collected, chiefly from the *Christus Patiens*, "a wretchedly stupid drama, falsely attributed to Gregory Nazianzenus, giving an account of the circumstances leading up to the Passion of Christ, and consisting of a *cento* of verses taken chiefly from the *Bacchæ*, *Rhesus*, and *Troades*" (Tyrrell, Introduction to his edition of the *Bacchæ*).

The lines marked *A.* may be taken as from the speech of Agavê; those marked *D.*, as from that of Dionysus.

A. To find a doom of rending midst the rocks¹

How shall I press him—woe's me!—tenderly
Unto my breast?—in what wise wail o'er him?

For, had mine hands received not mine own curse²

To rend to utter fragments every limb

Kissing the shreds of flesh which once I nursed

Come, ancient, this thrice-hapless wretch's head
Compose we reverently, and all the frame
Lay we together, far as in us lies.

O best-belovèd face, O youthful cheek

Lo, with this vesture do I veil thine head,
And these thy blood-bedabbled, furrow-scarred
Limbs

¹ This line is from Lucian.

² This line is from the Scholiast to Aristophanes *Plutus*.

D. He dared the chain, he dared the scoffing word . . .
They which should have been last to slay him, slew . . .
All this hath yon man suffered righteously.
Yea, and the nation's doom I will not hide . . .
That they must leave this city, expiate
The impious pollution of his murder,
And see no more their own land : that were sin.
All woes thou too must suffer will I tell.

RHESUS

ARGUMENT.

WHEN *Hector and the Trojans, as Homer telleth in the Eighth book of his Iliad, had driven the Greeks from before Troy back to their camp beside the sea, the host of Troy lay for that night in the plain overagainst them. And the Trojans sent forth Dolon a spy to know what the Greeks were minded to do. But there went forth also two spies from the camp of the Greeks, even Odysseus and Diomedes, and these met Dolon and slew him, after that he had told them in his fear all that they would know of the array of the Trojans, and of the coming of their great ally, Rhesus the Thracian, the son of a Goddess. And herein is told of the coming of the Thracian king, and of all that befell that night in the camp of the Trojans.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HECTOR, *captain of the host of Troy.*

AENEAS, *a Trojan chief.*

DOLON, *a Trojan.*

SHEPHERD.

RHESUS, *king of Thrace, son of the Muse Terpsichorê.*

ODYSSEUS, *a crafty Greek.*

DIOMEDES, *a valiant Greek.*

ATHENA, *a Goddess.*

PARIS, *named also Alexander, a Trojan, son of Priam.*

CHARIOTEER of Rhesus.

THE MUSE Terpsichorê, *mother of Rhesus.*

CHORUS, *consisting of sentinels of the Trojan army.*

Guards of Hector, Soldiers of the Thracian army.

SCENE :—In the camp of Troy, before Hector's tent.

RHESUS.

Enter Chorus marching to Hector's tent, before which stand guards.

CHORUS.

Ho, pass to the couch of Hector your lord,
Ye watchful henchmen that guard his sleep,
If perchance he will hearken our tidings, the word
Of them through the night's fourth watch that keep
The wide war-host safe-fenced with the spear.
Ho! raise thine head on thine arm upstaying;
Unseal thine eyes, the battle-dismaying:
Leap from thine earth-strewn leaf-bed sere,
Hector: 'tis time to hear. 10

Enter Hector from the tent.

HECTOR.

Who cometh?—the voice of a friend?—what wight?
The watchword give. Speak thou!
Who are ye that draw nigh in the hours of the night
To my couch? Ye must answer now.

CHORUS.

Sentinels we.

HECTOR.

Why then this affright ?

CHORUS.

Fear not.

HECTOR.

Is an ambush of darkness on us ?

CHORUS.

Nay, none.

HECTOR.

Why then hast forsaken thus
Thy watch, and uprousest the host, if thou bring
No tidings ? Knowest thou not how nigh 20
To the Argive spears lie slumbering
Our ranks in their battle-panoply ?

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Nay, but with armed hand, Hector, speed
Hence to thine allies' resting-place :
Rouse them from slumber, and bid upraise
Spears : let a friend to thy war-band run.
Bit ye and bridle the chariot-steed.
Who will go for us to Panthoüs' son,
Or Europa's, the chief of the Lycian array ?
Where be the choosers of victims to bleed ? 30
And the captains of dartmen, where be they ?
Archers of Phrygia, let sinews be slipped
O'er the notches, to strain the bows horn-tipt !

HECTOR.

In part dost thou bring to us tidings of dread,

In part of good cheer ; nought plainly is said.
 Hath Zeus' son Pan with the Scourge of Quaking
 Struck thee, that thus thy watch forsaking
 Thou startlest the host ? What meaneth thy clamour ?

What tidings are thine ? In thy panic-stammer
 Of thronging words is a riddle unread. 40

CHORUS.

(*Ant.*)

Argos' array is with balefires aglow,
 Hector, enkindled the livelong night ;
 And the lines of their galleys with torches are
 bright.

And with tumult to king Agamemnon's tent
 Streaming their warrior-thousands go :

" Thy behest ! " they cry : they are vehement.

Never in such wise heretofore
 Scared was the sea-borne host of the foe.

So—for I doubted what time hath in store—
 Bearing my tidings to thee I came, 50
 That with thee I be henceforth clear of blame.

HECTOR.

Timely thou com'st, though thou dost herald fear.
 Yon men are minded to flee forth the land
 With darkling oar, escaping so my ken :
 Their beacons of the night flash this to me. 55
 Ah Fortune, that thou shouldst in triumph's hour
 Rob of his prey the lion, ere my spear
 With one swoop make an end of Argos' host !
 For, had the sun's bright torches not been quenched,¹

¹ Reading dubious : ξυνέσχω gives no indisputable sense.

I had not stayed the triumph of my spear 60
 Ere I had burnt their ships, swept through their tents,
 Slaying Achaïans with this death-fraught hand.
 Afire was I to press on with the spear
 By night, take heaven-sent fortune at the flood ;
 But your wise seers, which know the mind of God, 65
 Persuaded me to wait the dawn of day,
 And leave then no Achaïan on dry land.
 But the foe—*they* for my soothsayers' rede
 Wait not : in darkness runaways wax in might !
 Swift must we speed our summons through the host 70
 To grasp their ready arms, to shake off sleep,
 That some—yea, as aboard their ships they spring,—
 With backs spear-scored may stain their gangways red,
 And others, bondmen snared in coiling cords,
 May learn to till the glebe of Phrygian fields. 75

CHORUS.

Hector, thy fiery haste outrunneth knowledge.
 Whether they flee we know not certainly.

HECTOR.

Why then should Argos' host set fires ablaze ?

CHORUS.

I know not : yet mine heart misgives me much.

HECTOR.

If this thou dread, then know thyself all fears ! 80

CHORUS.

Such blaze our foes ne'er kindled heretofore.

HECTOR.

Nor ever knew such shameful rout as this.

CHORUS.

This *thou* achievest : see thou to the rest.

HECTOR.

'Gainst foes one watchword shall suffice—to arm.

CHORUS.

Lo, where Aeneas comes in hot-foot haste, 85
As one that beareth tidings to his friends.

Enter Aeneas, Dolon, and others.

AENEAS.

Hector, for what cause through the host have come
Darkling unto thy couch scared sentinels,
Startling the host, for nightly communing ?

HECTOR.

Aeneas, in war-harness case thy limbs. 90

AENEAS.

What meaneth this ? Is stealthy ambuscade
Of foes 'neath darkness' screen announced afoot ?

HECTOR.

Our enemies flee : even now they board their ships.

AENEAS.

What certain proof hereof hast thou to tell ?

HECTOR.

All through the night they kindle flaming brands : 95
Yea, and methinks they will not wait the morn,
But, burning torches on the fair-benched ships,
In homeward flight will get them from this land.

AENEAS.

And thou, with what intent dost arm thine hand ?

HECTOR.

Even as they flee, and leap upon their decks, 100
My spear shall stay them and mine onset crush.
Shameful it were, and dastardly withal,
When God to us gives unresisting foes,
After such mischiefs wrought to let them flee.

AENEAS.

Would that thy prudence matched thy might of hand !
So is it : one man cannot be all-wise, [105
But diverse gifts to diverse men belong—
Prowess to thee, to others prudent counsel.
Thou hear'st of these fire-beacons, leap'st to think
The Achaians flee, dost pant to lead thine host 110
Over the trenches in the hush of night.
Yet if, the foss's yawning chasm crossed,
Thou find the foemen not in act to flee
The land, but set to face thy spear, beware
Lest, vanquished, thou return not unto Troy. 115
How shall we pass in rout their palisades ?
How shall thy charioteers the causeways cross
And shatter not the axles of the cars ?
Though victor, thou must still meet Peleus' son,

Who will not suffer thee to fire the ships, 120
 Nor take the Achaians captive, as thou hop'st—
 That man of fire, in valour a very tower.
 Nay, leave we sleeping under shield in peace
 Our host, at rest from travail of the strife.
 I counsel, send to spy upon the foe 125
 Whoso will go, and, if they purpose flight,
 Forth let us charge, and fall on Argos' host.
 But if these beacons lure us to a snare,
 We from the spy our foes' devices learn,
 And so confer : this is my mind, O King. 130

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Even such is my mind ; be it thine, from thy mood be
 thou swayed ;
 For I love not behests of captains that bring but a
 snare.
 Now what thing better than this shall our emprise aid
 Than to send forth a scout who anigh to the galleys
 shall fare
 Swift-footed, and learn why comes it that, where be
 arrayed 135
 The prows of the galleys, the fires of the foemen
 glare ?

HECTOR.

So be it, since ye all be in one mind.
 Go, still our allies : haply shall the host,
 Hearing of our night-council, be aroused.
 I will send one to spy upon the foe. 140
 If aught we learn of any stratagem,
 Thou shalt hear all, shalt know and share our counsel.
 But if now flightward they be hastening,

Watch thou, expecting aye the trumpet's call.
 I will not tarry, but with Argos' host 145
 This night will clash beside their launching-ways.

AENEAS.

Send with all speed : safe now is thine intent.
 Me shalt thou find a strenuous help at need.

HECTOR.

Who of you Trojans present at our speech
 Consents to go, a spy on Argos' fleet ? 150
 Who will be benefactor of this land ?
 Who answers ?—not in everything can I
 My native city and her allies serve.

DOLON.

I for my land consent to dare the risk,
 And go a spy unto the Argive ships ; 155
 And, all their counsels learnt, will I return.
 On one condition will I face the task.

HECTOR.

Well-named art thou,¹ O lover of thy land,
 Dolon : thy sire's house, glorious heretofore,
 Is now of thee made doubly glorious. 160

DOLON.

Then must I toil—but for my toil receive
 Fit guerdon ; for each deed that hath reward
 Assigned it, is with double pleasure done.

¹ Dolon, "the crafty," from *dolos*, craft.

HECTOR.

Yea, just thy claim is ; I gainsay it not.
Fix any guerdon, save my royal power. 165

DOLON.

Thy burden of royalty I covet not.

HECTOR.

A child of Priam wed, become my kinsman.

DOLON.

No bride for me of folk too high for me !

HECTOR.

Ready lies gold, if thou wilt ask this meed.

DOLON.

That have I in mine halls : not wealth I lack. 170

HECTOR.

What wouldst thou then of treasures Ilium hoards ?

DOLON.

Pledge me my gift, if thou destroy the foe.

HECTOR.

I will give. Ask aught save their chiefs for thralls.

DOLON.

Slay them : not Menelaus' life I ask.

HECTOR.

Sure, thou wouldst ask not of me Oïleus' son ? 175

DOLON.

Ill at field-toil be dainty-nurtured hands.

HECTOR.

Whom of the Greeks wouldst hold to ransom then ?

DOLON.

Erewhile I said it—gold my halls lack not.

HECTOR.

Then come, and of the spoils make choice thyself.

DOLON.

These to the Gods hang thou on temple-walls. 180

HECTOR.

What greater guerdon canst thou ask than these ?

DOLON.

Achilles' horses. He for worthy meed
Must toil, who sets his life on fortune's hazard.

HECTOR.

Ha ! steeds I covet dost thou covet too,
For, foals immortal of immortal sires, 185
They bear the battle-eager Peleus' son.
These King Poseidon, even the Sea-god, tamed,
Men say, and gave them unto Peleus' seed.
Yet will I cheat not hopes I raised, but give
Achilles' team, a glory to thine house. 190

DOLON.

I thank thee : so I win them, goodliest prize

Mid Phrygia's thousands is my valour's guerdon.
Be thou not envious : countless things beside
Shall make thee glad, the ruler of the land.

[*Exit Hector.*]

CHORUS.

(*Ant.*)

Great thine emprise is, and great the reward thou dost
claim ;

So thou mayst but attain thereunto, high bliss shalt
thou know.

Verily this thine adventure is fraught with fame.

Yet, to wed with a princess !—glory had this been, I
trow.

For the Gods' part, even let Justice look to the same :

But for men—never guerdon more perfect may man
bestow. 200

DOLON.

Now will I go : to mine own halls I pass,

To clothe me in such garb as best befits.

Thence will I speed my feet to Argos' ships.

CHORUS.

Say, wilt thou don aught save the attire thou hast ?

DOLON.

Yea, such as fits my work, my stealthy steps. 205

CHORUS.

Behoves that from the crafty craft we learn.

Say, what shall be the vesture of thy limbs ?

DOLON.

Over my back a wolfskin will I draw,

And the brute's gaping jaws shall frame mine head :
 Its forefeet will I fasten to my hands, 210
 Its legs to mine : the wolf's fourfooted gait
 I'll mimic, baffling so our enemies,
 While near the trench and pale of ships I am :
 But whenso to a lone spot come my feet,
 Two-footed will I walk : my ruse is this. 215

CHORUS.

Now kindly speed thee Hermes, Maia's son,
 Thither and back, prince of the guileful he !
 Thou know'st thy work : thou needest but good speed.

DOLON.

Return I shall, with slain Odysseus' head
 To show thee,—when thou hast this token sure, 220
 “Dolon,” shalt thou say, “reached the Argive ships,”—
 Or Tydeus' son's head. Not with bloodless hand
 Will I win home ere dawn rise o'er the earth.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

(Str. 1)

O King Thymbræan, O Delian Lord, O haunter of
 Lycia's fane,
 O sunlit brow, with thy bow do thou, Apollo, this night
 draw near :
 To our hero's perilous mission be guide and saviour,
 and O maintain, 230
 Almighty helper, our cause, who of old didst the ram-
 parts of Troy uprear.

(Ant. 1)

May he win to the galleys and enter the host of Hellas,
 and spy out their deeds,

And home return to the altars that burn in his father's
halls unto thee :

And, when Hector hath harried Achaia's array, may
he drive the Phthian steeds,

The steeds that on Peleus, Aiakus' son, were bestowed
by the Lord of the Sea. 240

(*Str.* 2)

Forasmuch as for home and for fatherland alone he
hath dared to go

Thither, and gaze on the fenced place, on the camp of
the Hellene ships,

His hardihood I extol,—of such heroes but few shall
be found, I trow,

When the sun in the sea sinks stormily, and the state's
prow heavily dips.

There is, there is mid the Phrygians found a hero!—
our prowess shall glow 250

Mid the clash of the spears :—at our help who sneers,
save the envious Mysian lips ?

(*Ant.* 2)

What chieftain Achaian shall he, as with death in his
hand he prowls to and fro,

As in shape of a brute of fourfold foot e'er the darkling
earth he steals,

Stab mid the tents ?—may he slay Menelaus, and lay
Agamemnon low,

Yea, bear the head of the war-king dead, and, loud as
her shriek outpeals,

Lay it in Helen's hands—the head of her kinsman who
worked us woe, 260

Who sailed to the strand of Troy's fair land with array
of a thousand keels.

Re-enter Hector. Enter Shepherd as Messenger.

SHEPHERD.

King, still through days to come be it mine to bear
Such tidings to my lords as now I bring ! 265

HECTOR.

Dull-witted oft the spirits are of clowns.
Thou com'st, meseems, to place that ill befits,
With tidings of thy flocks to warring lords.
Know'st not my mansion, or my father's throne ?
Thither shouldst thou bear word of flocks' increase. 270

SHEPHERD.

Dull-witted are we clowns, I gainsay not :
Yet none the less I bring thee welcome news.

HECTOR.

Forbear to tell me how the sheep-pens thrive.
Battles have we in hand, and brandish spears.

SHEPHERD.

Even such the tidings are wherewith I come. 275
A warrior captaining a countless host
Draws nigh,—thy friend, and this land's war-ally.

HECTOR.

Leaving what country's plains untenanted ?

SHEPHERD.

Thrace : and he bears the name of Strymon's son.

HECTOR.

Rhesus ! Doth *he* set foot in Troy, say'st thou ? 280

SHEPHERD.

Even so : thou lightenest half my speech's load.

HECTOR.

Why journeyeth he to Ida's pasture-lands,
Swerving from yon broad highway o'er the plain ?

SHEPHERD.

I know not certainly : one may divine.
Wise strategy was his to march by night, 285
Hearing how foeman-bands beset the plains.
Yet us, the hinds who dwell on Ida's slopes,
The immemorial cradle of your race,¹
His night-faring through woods beast-haunted scared.
For with loud shouts the on-surgng Thracian host 290
Marched ; and in panic-struck amaze we drove
Our flocks to ridges, lest of the Argives some
Were drawing nigh, to harry and to spoil
Thy folds, till accents fell upon our ears
Of no Greek tongue, and so we ceased from dread. 295
Then, drawing nigh, their chieftain's vanward scouts
I questioned in the Thracian speech, and asked
Who and whose son their captain was, that marched
Troyward, as war-ally to Priam's sons.
And, having heard whate'er I craved to know, 300
I stood still, and saw Rhesus, like a God,

¹ Or, "The land's hearth nestling at the mountain's feet," according to the interpretation of *αὐτόρριζον* preferred by Paley.

Towering upon his Thracian battle-wain.
 Golden the yoke-beam was that linked the necks
 Of car-steeds gleaming whiter than the snow.
 Upon his shoulders his gold-blazoned targe 305
 Flashed: a bronze Gorgon, as on Pallas' shield,
 Upon the frontlet of his horses bound,
 Clanging with many a bell clashed forth dismay.
 The number of his host thou couldst not sum
 In strict account—eye could not measure it. 310
 Many a knight, long lines of targeteers,
 And archers multitudinous, and a swarm
 Of dartmen passed, accoutred Thracian-wise.
 Such warrior is at hand for Troy's ally
 As Peleus' son shall not prevail to escape, 315
 Fleeing or biding onset of the spear.

CHORUS.

When to our burghers heaven lends present aid,
 Down-gliding to success fleets Fortune's stream.

HECTOR.

Ha, many a friend shall I find, now my spear
 Is triumphing, and Zeus is on our side! 320
 But need we have none of such as in days past
 Shared not our toil, when Ares buffeting
 With mighty blast was rending this land's sails.
 Then Rhesus showed what friend he was to Troy.
 To the feast he comes, who came not to the hunters 325
 With help of spear, what time they took the prey.

CHORUS.

Rightly dost thou condemn and blame such friends:
 Yet welcome them that fain would help our Troy.

HECTOR.

Enough are we, who warded Ilium long.

CHORUS.

Art sure thou hast even now destroyed the foe ? 330

HECTOR.

Sure : this the splendour of coming dawn shall prove.

CHORUS.

Beware the future : oft doth fortune veer.

HECTOR.

I hate to come with help to friends o'erlate :—

Yet, since he hath come, not as our ally,

But guest, unto our table let him come. 335

The sons of Priam owe no thanks to him.

CHORUS.

King, hate were bred of allies thrust away.

SHEPHERD.

His mere appearing should dismay our foes.

HECTOR.

Well counsell'est thou—thou too dost see aright.

This golden-mailèd Rhesus then shall come, 340

According to thy word, our land's ally.

CHORUS.

(Str. 1)

Nemesis, child of the Highest,

My lips from presumption refrain ;

For the thoughts to mine heart that are nighest
 Shall ring through my pæan-strain.
 Thou hast come, O River-god's son, to our land !
 'Welcome to Phrygia's palace-gate,
 Whom thy mother Pierian hath sent so late
 From the river with goodly bridges spanned, 350
(*Ant.* 1)

Even Strymon, whose waterbreaks eddied
 'Twixt the breasts of the Queen of Song,
 That the maid with the River-god wedded
 Bare thee, young champion and strong.
 Thou art come to me, manifest Zeus, borne high
 O'er thy silver-flecked horses ! O fatherland mine,
 Lo, Phrygia, a saviour !—acclaim him for thine
 By the Gods' grace :—" Zeus my deliverer ! " cry.
(*Str.* 2)

Shall she ever again, our ancient Troy, 360
 See the sun go down on the revel's joy,

While the songs that extol sweet love are pealing,
 While feaster to feaster the wine-challenge crieth,
 As circles the cup, and the brain is reeling,
 While the Atreïds' sail o'er the dark sea flieth
 From Troy low down in the offing that lieth ?
 O friend, mayest thou with thine arm and thy spear
 To help me in this my need appear,
 And return safe home from thy glory here !
(*Ant.* 2)

Come thou, appear, thy buckler upraise : 370
 Be its gold-sheen flashed in Achilles' face
 As it gleameth athwart the chariot-railing,
 As thou speedest thy steeds on thunderous-prancing
 At the foe from thy spear's forked lightning quailing.
 None, who hath braved thee in fury advancing,

Upon Argive lawn unto Hera dancing
 Shall stand, but here shall the corpse of him slain
 Lie, by the Thracians' doom of bane,
 To cumber the soil of its load full fain.¹

Enter Rhesus in his chariot, with Thracian guard.

Hail, great King, hail!—O Thrace, of thy scions 380
 The glory is this—true prince to behold!
 Mark ye the strong limbs lapped in gold:
 Heard ye the bells clash proud defiance,
 As their tongues from his buckler-handles tolled?
 'Tis a God, Troy! Ares' self is there,
 This Strymon's son, whom the Song-queen bare!
 Bringing times of refreshing to thee doth he fare.

RHESUS.

Brave son of brave sire, prince of this land, hail,
 Hector! I greet thee after many days.
 I joy in thy good speed, who see thee camped 390
 Nigh the foes' towers. I come to help thee raze
 Their ramparts, and to fire their galleys' hulls.

HECTOR.

Son of the Songful Mother, of the Muse,
 And Thracian Strymon's flood, I love to speak
 The truth: no man am I of double tongue. 395
 Long, long since shouldest thou have come to aid
 This land, nor suffered, for all help of thine,
 That Troy should stoop 'neath spears of Argive foes.
 Thou canst not say thou cam'st not to thy friends,
 Nor visitedst for their help, for lack of bidding. 400

¹ Since the corpse of an enemy is a welcome burden to the soil of our country.

What Phrygian herald, or what ambassage,
 Came not with instant prayer for help to Troy?
 What splendour of gifts did we not send to thee?
 Alien from Greece as we, our countryman,
 To Greeks didst thou betray us, all thou couldst. 405
 Yet thee from petty lordship made I great,
 Yea, king of all the Thracians, with this arm,
 When round Pangaius and Paionia's land
 In battle-brunt on Thracian chiefs I fell,
 Shattered their shield, and gave their folk to thee 410
 In thrall. This grace thou hast trodden under foot,
 And laggard com'st to help afflicted friends,
 While they that are in no wise kin to us¹
 Have long been here; and some in grave-mounds lie
 Slain,—no mean loyalty to our city this,— 415
 Some yet in arms beside their battle-cars
 Abide, enduring hardness—chilly blast
 And the sun's glare throat-parching, not on beds,
 Like thee, with pledge of many a long deep draught.
 Thus, that thou mayst know Hector's plain blunt
 mood, 420
 I blame thee, and I speak it to thy face.

RHESUS.

Even such am I: no devious track of words
 I follow: no man I of double tongue.
 I for my absence from this land was vexed,
 Chafing with grief of heart, far more thou. 425
 But Scythia's folk, whose frontiers march with mine,
 Even as I set forward, Troyward bound,
 Made war on me; by this I had reached the shores

¹ Reading *ἐν γένει* (Paley).

Of Euxine, with my Thracian host to cross.
 There upon Scythia's soil great blood-gouts dripped 430
 From spears, of Thracian slaughter blent with Scythian.
 Such was the chance that barred my journeying
 To Troyland's plains to be thy battle-aid.
 I smote them, took their sons for hostages,
 Set them a yearly tribute to mine house, 435
 Straight sailed across the sea-gorge, and am here.
 I passed afoot the borders of thy land,
 Not, as thou proudly tauntest, with deep draughts
 Of wine, nor lying soft in golden halls :
 But what the icy storm-blasts are that sweep 440
 Paionian steppes and Thracian sea, I learnt
 By sleepless suffering, wrapped but in this cloak.
 Late is my coming, timely none the less ;
 For ten full years hast thou been warring now,
 Yet hast achieved nought, dost from day to day 445
 Against the Argives cast the dice of war.
 But for me one sun's dawning shall suffice
 To storm their towers, to fall upon their fleet,
 And slay the Achaïans. So, thy toils cut short,
 From Ilium on the morrow home I pass. 450
 Of you let no man lift in hand a shield :
 I ruining with my spear will still the vaunts
 Of yon Achaïans, howso late I come.

CHORUS.

(*Str. to Ant.* 820—832).

Hail to thee ! welcome thy shout is, our champion
 from Zeus and our friend !
 Only may Zeus the most highest forgive thee thy vaunt,
 and defend
 Thee from the malice of Jealousy, her with whom none
 may contend !

Never the galleys of Argos, aforetime nor late, to our
land 460
Brought mid the hosts of their heroes a champion so
mighty of hand.
How shall Achilles or Aias thy battle-spear's lightning
withstand ?

O that I also may live to behold it, the on-coming day !
O to behold it, thy vengeance triumphant, when lifted
to slay
Flasheth the lance in thine hand, spreading havoc
through Hellas' array !

RHESUS.

Such deeds will I, for my long absence' sake,
Perform for thee. So Nemesis say not nay,
When we have freed this city of foes, and thou
Hast chosen triumph's firstfruits for the Gods, 470
Then will I march with thee to Argive land,
Swoop down, and waste all Hellas with the spear,
That they in turn may learn what suffering means.

HECTOR.

If I, delivered from this imminent curse,
Might sway a city as of old secure, 475
Then were my soul all thankfulness to heaven.
But, for thy talk of Argos and the meads
Of Hellas, these shall no spear lightly waste.

RHESUS.

These that have come, are they not named her best ?

HECTOR.

Nor I misprize them, who can scarce repel. 480

RHESUS.

Then is not all achieved when these are slain ?

HECTOR.

Gaze not afar, neglecting things at hand.

RHESUS.

Thou seem'st content to suffer unavenged !

HECTOR.

My realms be wide enow, though here I stay.

But thou—upon the left wing or the right,

Or centre of our allies, mayst thou plant

Thy buckler, and array thy battle-line.

485

RHESUS.

Hector, alone I fain would fight the foe.

Yet, if thou think shame not to help to fire

The ship-sterns, after all thy toils o'erpast,

Post me to face Achilles and his host.

490

HECTOR.

'Gainst him one cannot lift the eager spear.

RHESUS.

Yet rumour ran that he too sailed to Troy.

HECTOR.

He sailed, and he is here ; but, being wroth

With fellow-chieftains, lifteth not the spear.

495

RHESUS.

Who next him in their host hath high renown ?

HECTOR.

Aias I count no whit outdone by him,
 And Tydeus' son ; and that glib craftiest knave
 Odysseus—yet, for courage, brave enow,
 And chief of mischief-workers to this land, 500
 Who came by night unto Athena's fane,
 Her image stole, and bare to Argos' ships.
 In vile attire but now, in beggar's guise,
 He passed our gate-towers : loudly did he curse
 The Argives, he, their spy to Ilium sent ! 505
 He slew the guards, the warders of the gates,
 And stole forth. Aye in ambush is he found
 By the Thymbræan altars nigh the town
 Lurking—a foul pest he to wrestle with !

RHESUS.

No man of knightly soul doth deign by stealth 510
 To slay his foe ; he meets him face to face.
 This man who skulks, thou sayest, like a thief,
 And weaves his plots, him will I take alive,
 And at your gates' outgoings set him up
 Impaled, a feast for vultures heavy-winged. 515
 Robber and rifler of the shrines of Gods,
 Meet is it that he die by such a doom !

HECTOR.

Encamp ye now and rest, for it is night.
 A spot myself will show thee, where thine host
 Must pass the night, apart from our array. 520

"Phœbus" the watchword is, if need arise :
Remember it, and tell thy Thracian host.
(*To the Chorus.*) Ye must go forth in front of all our
lines :

Watch keenly, and our spy upon the ships,
Dolon, receive ; for, if he be unharmed, 525
By this he draweth nigh the camp of Troy.

(*Exeunt Hector and Rhesus.*)

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

Ho, warders, to whom is the next watch given ?
Whose warding followeth mine ?

For the stars that were high in the evening sky are
setting : uprisen ye see

The Pleiads seven : in the midst of heaven the Eagle's
broad wings shine.¹ 530

Ho, comrades, awake from your slumber ! Why do ye
linger ? Hither to me !

Ho ye, ho ye, from your couches leap, for the sentinel-
tramp appear !

Do ye see not afar where the silver car of the moon o'er
the sea hangs low ?

The dayspring cometh—break off your sleep, for the
dawning is near, is near.

Lo there in the east where gleameth a star—'tis her
harbinger : rouse ye, ho !

¹ As Rhesus, starting, we may suppose, at the beginning of spring for Troy, had had to turn back and undertake a spring campaign in Scythia, the time of his actual arrival at Troy could not well be before the summer. Now Aquila is high in the southern heavens, and the Pleiades are well above the eastern horizon, at about 3 a.m. in the middle of June. The star referred to as just rising in the east might be Mira Ceti.

Hark! flocks to the pasture are going: they bleat as
 they stray down Ida's brow.
 And I hear it float through the night, the note of the
 pipe's ethereal cry.
 And drowsihead with her witchery sweet is lulling mine
 eyelids now;
 For to weary eyes she cometh, I wot, most dear when
 the dawn is nigh.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Why draweth not near unto us that scout
 Whom Hector to spy on the fleet sent out?

SEMICHORUS 2.

Long stays he: there haunts me a fearful doubt.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Is he slain, think ye, in an ambuscade? 560
 Manifest soon shall his fate be made.

SEMICHORUS 2.

I rede ye then that we haste to call
 The Lycians: to them did the fifth watch fall
 When the lot to our stations assigned us all.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Odysseus and Diomedes.

ODYSSEUS.

Diomedes, heard'st thou not—or through mine ears 565
 Thrills but an empty sound?—a clash of arms?

DIOMEDES.

Nay, 'tis steel harness hung o'er chariot-rails

That rings. Through me too passed a shiver of fear,
Till I discerned the clank of horses' chains.

ODYSSEUS.

Beware thou light not darkling on their guards. 570

DIOMEDES.

Even in darkness will I step with heed.

ODYSSEUS.

But, shouldst thou rouse them, knowest thou the
watchword?

DIOMEDES.

“Phœbus”—from Dolon's mouth I heard the word.

ODYSSEUS.

Ha! void of foes this bivouac I see!

DIOMEDES.

Yet surely Dolon told us that here lay 575
Hector, against whom this my spear is trailed.

ODYSSEUS.

What means this? Is his troop elsewhither gone?

DIOMEDES.

Perchance he frames 'gainst us a stratagem.

ODYSSEUS.

Ay, bold is Hector, now triumphant—bold!

DIOMEDES.

What then, Odysseus, shall we do? The man 580
We find not on his couch: our hopes are foiled.

ODYSSEUS.

Return we to the ships' array in haste.
Some God, whoever giveth him good speed,
Shields him. 'Tis not for us to strive with fate.

DIOMEDES.

Nay, on Aeneas fall we, or on Paris— 585
Of foes most hated,—and smite off their heads.

ODYSSEUS.

How in the dark, amidst a host of foes,
Unperilled wilt thou search, and slay these twain?

DIOMEDES.

Yet base it were to hie to Argos' ships
With nought of mischief to the foe achieved. 590

ODYSSEUS.

Nothing achieved? Have we not slain the spy
Upon the galleys, Dolon? Have we not
His spoils? Look'st thou to ravage all their camp?
Hear me—return we; so good speed be ours.

Athena appears above the stage.

ATHENA.

Ho! whither go ye, from the lines of Troy 595
Fleeing, with sorrow rankling in your hearts

That Fortune grants you not the life of Hector,
 Nor Paris? Know ye not of this ally,
 Rhesus, to Troy magnificently come?
 If he live through this night until the dawn, 600
 Him neither Aias' nor Achilles' spear
 Shall stay from wasting all the Argive fleet,
 Razing your ramparts, and within your gates
 Making broad havoc of onslaught with his lance.
 Slay him, and all is thine. But Hector's couch 605
 Let be: spare thou to smite his head from him.
 To him shall death come from another hand.

ODYSSEUS.

O Queen Athena—for I know the sound
 Of thy familiar voice, since evermore
 Beside me in my toils thou wardest me,— 610
 Tell to us where this hero sleeping lies,
 Where he is stationed in the alien host.

ATHENA.

Here is he, nigh, not quartered with the host:
 Hector to him assigned a resting-place
 Without his lines, till night give place to day. 615
 Hard by, his white steeds to his Thracian car
 Are tethered: clear they gleam athwart the dark
 As gleams the white wing of a river-swan.
 These lead ye hence when ye have slain their lord,
 Proud trophy for your halls: there is no land 620
 That holdeth such a team of chariot-steeds.

ODYSSEUS.

Diomedes, either slay thou Thracia's folk,
 Or leave to me, and thou the horses heed.

DIOMEDES.

I will be slayer. Manage thou the steeds ;
For versed art thou in craft, and keen of wit. 625
Best set each man where best his help avails.

ATHENA.

Lo, yonder Alexander I discern
Draw nigh us. From some watchman hath he heard
A doubtful rumour of the approach of foes.

DIOMEDES.

Or cometh he with others, or alone ? 630

ATHENA.

Alone. To Hector's couch, meseems, he fares,
To tell how spies upon the host be here.

DIOMEDES.

Ought he not then to be the first to die ?

ATHENA.

Thou canst not overpass the doom of fate.
It may not be that by thine hand he die. 635
Haste thou against the man for whom thou bring'st
The slaughter-doom. To Paris will I seem
Kypris his friend, present to aid his toils,
And with false words will answer him I hate.
This have I told you : nought the doomed man knows,
Nor aught hath heard, for all he is so near. [640

[*Exeunt Od. and Diom.*

Enter Paris.

PARIS.

War-chief and brother, ho, to thee I call,
Hector ! Dost sleep ? Behoves thee not to watch ?
Some foe to us is nigh unto the host—
Marauders they, or peradventure spies. 645

ATHENA.

Fear not. I, Kypris, ward thee graciously.
I take thought for thy warfare, nor forget
Thine honour done me, and thy service thank.
And now, when triumpheth the host of Troy,
Leading to thee a mighty friend I come, 650
The Thracian scion of the Muse, the Queen
Of Song : he bears the name of Strymon's son.

PARIS.

Gracious art thou unto my city still,
And unto me. I trow I won for Troy
Life's goodliest treasure, judging thee most fair. 655
Vague rumour brought me hither : some report
Amongst the guard had risen of Argive spies
Even now at hand. One saith it that saw nought :
One saw them come, yet nothing more can tell.
Wherefore to Hector's resting-place I came. 660

ATHENA.

Fear nothing : in the host no peril is.
Hector to quarter Thracia's host is gone.

PARIS.

Thou dost assure me : lo, I trust thy words.
And free of fear I go to guard my post.

ATHENA.

Go : be thou sure that all thy care is mine, 665
 That so triumphant I may see my friends.
 Yea, and thou too shalt prove my zeal for thee.

[*Exit Paris.*

Ho ye ! I bid you, over-eager twain—
 Laertes' son !—let sleep the whetted swords ;
 For at our feet dead lies the Thracian chief ; 670
 Our prize his steeds are. But the foe have heard,
 And close on you. Now must ye with all speed
 To yon ship-channels flee. Why linger ye,
 When bursts the storm of foes, to save your lives ?

Enter Odysseus followed by Chorus, tumultuously.

CHORUS.

Ha, smite !—ha, smite !—ha, smite !—ha, smite !
 Stab thou !—stab thou !—who is this wight ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

Look ye on him—this fellow, I say !—

SEMICHORUS 2.

Marauders who under night's dark pall
 Are startling our array !—
 Hitherward, hitherward, all ! 680

SEMICHORUS 1.

I have them caught in the grasp of mine hand !

SEMICHORUS 2.

(*To Od.*) What is thy troop ?—whence art thou ?—a
 man of what land ?

ODYSSEUS.¹

Nought to thee is this !

SEMICHORUS 1.

For thou shalt die for evil wrought this day !
Tell the watchword, ere the spear unto thine heart have
found the way !

ODYSSEUS.

Ha ! and hast thou murdered Rhesus ? 685

SEMICHORUS 2.

Nay, his would-be murderer, thee,
Question I.²

ODYSSEUS (*beckoning them off the stage*).

Fear not, come hither.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Strike him ! strike him ! strike him, ye !

ODYSSEUS.

Hold, each man !

SEMICHORUS 2.

Nay, hold we will not !

ODYSSEUS.

Ho ! let not a friend be slain !

¹ The dialogue which follows is differently arranged by various editors.

² Reading *ἰστροπῶ*.

SEMICHORUS 1.

What then is the watchword ?

ODYSSEUS.

Phœbus.

SEMICHORUS 2.

Right : his spear let each refrain.

ODYSSEUS.

Know'st thou whither went the men ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

Sooth, somewhere we beheld them nigh.

ODYSSEUS.

Press, each man, upon their track ! 690

SEMICHORUS 2.

Or shall we raise the 'larum cry ?

[*Odysseus slips away into the darkness.*]

SEMICHORUS 1.

Nay, 'twere perilous to scare with night-alarms a war-ally.

(*They perceive Odysseus' absence.*)

CHORUS.

(*Str.*)

He is gone from us !—who was the man

Who shall vaunt of his aweless might ?

Out of mine hands, lo, he ran—

Where on him now shall I light ?

Unto whom shall I liken him—him, who with foot un-
afraid through the night

Passed ranks, passed many a sentinel-post ?

A Thessalian is he ?

Doth he dwell in a town that from Locris' coast

Looketh over the sea ? 700

Liveth he mid the isles far-scattered that lie ?

Who ? — whence ? — what fatherland-home doth he
boast ?

Of the Gods whom doth he confess most high ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

Whose deed is this ?—Odysseus' dark design ?

SEMICHORUS 2.

Yea, if from his past deeds we may divine.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Ha, thinkest thou so ?

SEMICHORUS 2.

Yea, how should I not ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

A daring foe unto us, I wot !

SEMICHORUS 2.

Whose courage, what man, dost thou praise ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

Odysseus the chief.

SEMICHORUS 2.

Praise not the prowess thou of a knavish thief !

CHORUS.

(Ant.)

He came in the days overpast 710

Unto Troy :—from his eyes rheum poured :

Rags round his body were cast :

'Neath his cloak was a hidden sword :

Like a vagabond varlet he prowled, begging crumbs
from the feastful board,

With head overgrimed with foulness, and hair

All filth-defiled.

As though the war-chiefs' foe he were,

The house he reviled—

The house of the Atreïd kings :—O meet,

O just should it be that he perish, ere 720

He trample Phrygia beneath his feet.

SEMICHORUS 1.

Whether Odysseus or another came,

I fear me : us the guards shall Hector blame,—

SEMICHORUS 2.

How blame us ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

Shall speak his suspicion out,—

SEMICHORUS 2.

Of what deed ? What is thy fearful doubt ?

SEMICHORUS 1.

That even by us passed in—

SEMICHORUS 2.

What men?—say who!

SEMICHORUS 1.

They that this night to the Phrygian array won through.

Cry of Charioteer behind the scenes.

CHARIOTEER.

O heavy chance of fate! Woe's me! Woe's me!

CHORUS.

Ha! Now hush ye all! Crouch low! Perchance one
cometh to the snare. 730CHARIOTEER (*behind scenes*).*O the sore mischance to Thrace!*

CHORUS.

'Tis some ally that waileth there.

Enter Charioteer, wounded.

CHARIOTEER.

Woe's me! O King of Thracians, woe for thee!

O bitter sight of Troy to thee this day!

What end of life hath snatched thee hence away!

CHORUS.

(Str.)

Who art thou?—what ally?—mine eyes the night
Makes dim: thee cannot I discern aright.

CHARIOTEER.

Where shall I light on a Trojan chief?
O where shall Hector be found of my quest
Slumbering yet in shield-fenced rest? 740
Unto whom of your chiefs shall I tell our grief?
Ah our calamities!—ah for the deeds in the night
Unto Thracia wrought of the felon who vanished from
sight,
Who hath knit up a skein of misery manifest!

CHORUS.

Some ill, meseems, to Thracia's company (Ant.)
Befalls—if this man's words mean aught for me.

CHARIOTEER.

Undone is our host, laid low is our king
By a deadly stab, by a stroke of guile!
Alas and alas! woe worth the while!
Ah, how am I inly racked by the sting 750
Of my gory wound! Would God I might straightway
die!
Was it meet that so soon as he came, your Troy's ally,
Rhesus and I should perish by end so vile?

CHORUS.

Lo, not in riddles doth he publish this:
Nay, plainly of allies destroyed he tells. 755

CHARIOTEER.

Ill hath been wrought us—shame, to crown that “ill,”
The foulest shame! Yea, double ill is this!
To die with fame, if one must die, I trow,

Is bitterness to him who dies—how not ?
 Yet fame and honour crown his living kin. 760
 But, as a fool dies, fameless we have died.
 For, soon as Hector pointed us our quarters,
 And told the watchword, couched on earth we slept,
 Outworn with toil : our host no watchmen set
 For nightlong guard, nor rank by rank were laid 765
 Our arms, nor from the horses' yokes were hung
 The car-whips, since our king had word that ye
 Were camped triumphant nigh the galley-sterns :
 So, careless all, we flung us down and slept.
 Now I with heedful heart from slumber rose, 770
 And dealt the steeds their corn with stintless hand,
 Looking to yoke them with the dawn for fight.
 Then spied I twain that prowled around our host
 Through the thick gloom ; but, soon as I bestirred me,
 They cowered low, and straight drew back again. 775
 I cried to them to come not near our host,—
 Deeming some thieves from our allies drew nigh :—
 Nought said they ; neither added I thereto,
 But to my couch went back and slept again.
 And in my sleep a vision nightmared me :— 780
 The steeds I tended, and at Rhesus' side
 Drave in the car, I saw as in a dream
 Mounted of wolves that rode upon their backs ;
 And with their tails these lashed the horses' flanks,
 Scourging them on. They snorted, and outbreathed
 Rage from their nostrils, tossing high their manes.¹ [785
 I, even in act to save from those fierce things
 The steeds, woke : the night-horror smote me awake.
 Then death-moans, as I raised my head, I heard ;

¹ Reading *φόβην*.

And new-shed blood hot-welling plashed on me 790
 As by my murdered lord's death-throes I lay.
 Upright I leapt, with never a spear in hand.
 Then, as I peered and groped to find my lance,
 From hard by 'neath my ribs a sword-thrust came
 From some strong man—strong, for I felt the blade 795
 Strike home, felt that deep furrow of the gash.
 Face-down I fell: the chariot and the steeds¹
 The robbers took, and fled into the night.
 Ah me! Ah me!
 Pain racketh me—O wretch! I cannot stand.
 What ill befell I know—I saw it. How 800
 The slain men perished, this I cannot tell,
 Nor by what hand: but this do I divine—
 Fouly have they been dealt with by allies.

CHORUS.

O charioteer of Thracia's lord ill-starred,
 Never suspect of this deed thine allies. 805
 Lo, Hector's self, who hath heard of your mischance,
 Comes: in thine ills he sorroweth, as beseems.

Enter Hector.

HECTOR.

How passed the men² who wrought this direst scathe—
 Spies from the foemen—passed unmarked of you,
 For your shame, and for slaughter of the host, 810
 Nor ye withstood them entering the camp,

¹ Others, "the team of chariot-steeds;" the Homeric account.

² Nauck's reading. The MSS. πῶς ᾧ, "How passed—O ye who have wrought, etc."

Nor going forth? Shall any smart for this
 Save thee?—for thou wast warder of the host.
 They are gone, unsmitten!—gone, with many a scoff
 At Phrygian cowardice and me, your chief! 815
 Now know this well—by father Zeus 'tis sworn—
 Surely the scourge, or doom of headsman's axe
 Awaits thee for this work: else reckon thou
 Hector a thing of nought, a craven wretch.

CHORUS.

(*Ant. to Str.* 454—466).

Woe for me! terrible evil, ah terrible, lighted on me¹ 820
 When with my tidings I came, O thou warder of Troy,
 unto thee,—
 Tidings of beacon-fires lit through the Argive array by
 the sea.

Yet have I suffered the night not to drop from her
 slumberous wing
 Sleep on mine eyelids—I swear it by holiest Simoïs'
 spring!
 Let not thine anger against me be hot, who am guilt-
 less, O King!

Then, if hereafter, as time runneth on, or in word or in
 deed 830
 Ever thou find me transgressing, O then to the grave
 do thou speed
 Me,—yea, alive to go down to the pit; nor for mercy I
 plead.

¹ Adopting Dindorf's reading.

CHARIOTEER.

Why threaten these, and strive, barbarian thou,
To cozen barbarian wit with glozing speech?
Thine was the deed! None other shall the dead, 835
Or wounded living, hold to be thereof
Guilty! Long speech and subtle shalt thou need
To make me think thou murderedst not thy friends,
As coveting the steeds, for which thou slayest
Allies whose coming was so straitly urged. 840
They came—they are dead! More seemly Paris
shamed

Guest-faith, than thou, who murderest thine allies!
Nay, never tell me 'twas some Argive came
And slew us! Who could through the Trojan lines
Have passed, and won to us, unmarked of them? 845
Before us camped were thou and Phrygia's host:—
Of *thy* friends who was wounded then, who slain,
When came the foes whereof thou tellest us?
We—some are wounded, some have suffered scathe
More deadly, and the sun's light see no more. 850
In plain words, no Achaian we accuse.
Who of the foe had come, and in the night
Found Rhesus' couch—except a very God
Guided the slayers? They not even knew
That he had come! Now nay, this plot is thine. 855

HECTOR.

Long time have I had dealings with allies,
Long as Achaian folk have trod my land;
Nor ever bare I ill report of them.
With thee should I begin? May no such lust
For steeds take me, that I should slay my friends! 860

This is Odysseus' work—for who beside
Of Argives had devised or wrought such deed?
I fear him, and my mind misgives me sore
Lest he have met our Dolon too, and slain.
Long time hath he been gone, nor yet appears. 865

CHARIOTEER.

I know not thine Odysseus, whom thou nam'st.
I have been smitten by no alien foe.

HECTOR.

Then think thou so, if this to thee seem good.

CHARIOTEER.

Land of my fathers, O to die in thee!

HECTOR.

Die not: suffice this multitude of dead. 870

CHARIOTEER.

Ah, whither turn me, of my lord bereft?

HECTOR.

Shelter and healing shall mine own house give thee.

CHARIOTEER.

How shall the hands of murderers tend mine hurts?

HECTOR.

This man will cease not telling the same tale.

CHARIOTEER.

Perish the doer ! Not at thee my tongue 875
Hurls this, as plains thy pride :—but Justice knows.

HECTOR (*to attendants*).

Ye, take him up and bear him to mine house.
So tend him that he shall not slander us.
And ye must go to those upon the wall,¹
To Priam and our elders, bidding them 880
Bury the slain beside the public way.²

[*Exeunt bearers with Charioteer.*]

CHORUS.

Wherefore from heights of victory
Doth fortune drag down Troy unto woe—
Fortune estranged ? What purposeth she ?
(*The Muse appears above the stage with Rhesus in her arms*).

Ho ye !—lo there !—what ho !
What God overhead, O King, doth appear,
In whose hands is the corpse of the newly dead
Borne as it were on a bier ?
I quail as I look on the vision of dread.

MUSE.

Trojans, fear not to look : the Muse am I, 890
One of the Song-queens, honoured of the wise.
My dear son I behold in piteous sort

¹ See *Iliad* iii, 145—244.

² He specifies for the slain Thracians the most honourable place of sepulture : cf. *Alcestis*, ll. 835-6.

Slain by his foes. One day shall he who slew,
Guileful Odysseus, pay fit penalty.

(Raises the death-dirge).

(Str.)

In moans that of no strange lips I borrow,

O son, my sorrow,

I wail for thee.

What woefullest journey was thine, thy faring

Of ill-starred daring

To Troy oversea,

900

Despite my warning, thy father's pleading!

Dear head!—O bleeding

Heart of me!

CHORUS.

So far as one may take on him who hath

No tie of kinship, I too wail thy son.

905

MUSE.

(Ant.)

Curse ye, Odysseus and Oineus' scion,

Through whom I cry on

My noble dead!

Curse her, who voyaged from Hellas over

To a Phrygian lover,

910

A wanton's bed,

Who of sons made desolate towns without number,

And bowed thee in slumber

Of death, dear head!

Sore hast thou wrung mine heart, Philammon's son, 915

In life, and since to Hades thou hast passed.

Thine overweening, ruinous rivalry

With Muses, made me bear this hapless child.
 For, as I waded through the river's flow,
 Lo, I was clasped in Strymon's fruitful couch, 920
 What time we came unto Pangaios' ridge,
 Whose dust is gold, with flute and lyre arrayed,
 We Muses, for great strife of minstrelsy
 With Thracia's cunning bard ; and we made blind
 Thamyris, who full oft had mocked our skill. 925
 And, when I bare thee, shamed before my sisters,
 And for my maidenhead, down thy sire's fair swirls
 I cast thee ; and to nurse thee Strymon chose
 Arms of no mortal, but the Fountain-maids.
 There reared in glorious fashion by the Nymphs, 930
 Thou ruledst Thrace, a king of men, my child.
 While through thy native land thou didst achieve
 Great deeds of war, I feared not for thy life ;
 But still I warned thee never to fare to Troy,
 Knowing thy doom : but Hector's embassies, 935
 And messages untold that elders bare,
 Wrought on thee to set forth to aid thy friends.
 Athena, thou art cause of all this doom !
 Nought did Odysseus, neither Tydeus' son,
 With all their doings :¹—think not I am blind ! 940
 And yet thine Athens we with honour crown :
 My sister Song-queens chiefly haunt thy land ;
 And the torch-march of those veiled Mysteries
 Did Orpheus teach her, cousin of the dead—
 This dead, whom thou hast slain ! Musaius too, 945
 Thy citizen revered, the chiefest bard
 Of men, him Phœbus and the Muses trained :—

¹ So MSS.; but "Perform: thou didst it," is Paley's suggestion.

And this my meed !—with arms clasped round my son
I wail ! No new sage will I bring to thee.

CHORUS.

Falsely then Thracia's charioteer reviled 950
Us, Hector, as the plotters of his death.

HECTOR.

I knew it : need was none of seers to tell
That this man perished by Odysseus' craft.
And how could I, beholding Hellas' host
Camped on this soil, but send mine heralds forth 955
To friends, to bid them come and help our land ?
I sent them ; and he came, who owed me aid.
Ah, little joy have I to see him dead !
Ready am I to rear him now a tomb,
And to burn with him splendour of countless robes. 960
A friend he came, in sorrow goeth hence.

MUSE.

He shall not into earth's dark lap go down ;
With such strong crying will I pray Hell's Queen,
Child of Demeter Lady of Earth's increase,
To grant his soul release. My debtor is she 965
To show that yet she honours Orpheus' friends.
Yet to me as one dead, that sees not light,
Henceforth shall he be : never shall he come
To meet me more, nor see his mother's form.
In caverns of the silver-veinèd land 970
A god-man shall he lie, beholding light,
As Bacchus' prophet 'neath Pangaïos' rock
Dwelt, god revered of them that knew the truth.

More lightly now the grief of that Sea-queen
 Shall fall on me : for her son too must die. 975
 Thee first we Sisters will with dirges hymn,
 Achilles then, in Thetis' hour of grief.¹
 Not him shall Pallas save, who murdered thee,
 Such shaft doth Loxias' quiver keep for him.
 Ah, woes of mothers ! Miseries of men ! 980
 Yea, whoso taketh true account of you
 Childless will live, nor bear sons for the grave. [*Exit.*

CHORUS.

Now are the King's death-rites his mother's care.
 But if thou wilt do work that lies to hand,
 Hector, 'tis time ; for yonder dawns the day. 985

HECTOR.

Depart ye : bid our comrades straightway arm,
 And lay the yokes upon the car-steeds' necks.
 Then torch in hand must ye await the blast
 Of Tuscan clarion ; for I trust to press

¹ " And thy mother came up from the waves with the death-
 less Maids of the Sea ;
 And the sound of the cry of them rang o'er the sea-flood
 awfully
 And the hoar Sea-ancient's daughters gathered around
 thee then
 Mourning with wails heart-piercing, and wrapped thee
 in raiment divine ;
 And there moaned an answering dirge from the sweet-
 voiced Muses nine ;
 And there hadst thou seen no face of an Argive but
 streamed with tears,
 So entralling the clear-ringing voice of the Muses
 thrilled through our ears."

Over their trench, their walls, and fire the ships 990
Achaian, and to bring in freedom's day
For Troy with yonder sun's uprising beams.

CHORUS.

Give heed to the King : now march we in war's array,
And tell unto them that with Troy be allied
These things. May the God give triumph to us
straightway 995
Who fights on our side.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

THE END.

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